

Robert Herrick

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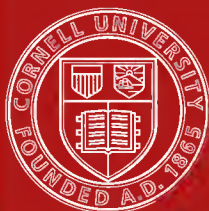
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SOMETIME



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TO
M.H.C.

"For is it not possible for al thinges to be well, ones all men were good. Whych I thinke wil not be thies good many yeares."

SIR THOMAS MOORE, *Utopia*, BOOK I.

"Human purpose has arisen as a product of the mechanical workings of variation and selection. But now that consciousness has awakened in life, it has at last become possible to hope for a speedier and less wasteful method of evolution, a method based on foresight and elaborate planning instead of the old, slow method of blind struggle and blind selection. At present that is no more than a hope. But human knowledge and power have grown very marvellously during the last few hundred years. The multitude of our race living today still does not know of more than a minute fraction of what is known to man, nor dream yet of the things he may presently do."

WELLS AND HUXLEY, *The Science of Life*, VOL. I, P. 642.

"We are living now within a few thousand years of the second glaciation; the world's climate is still oscillating one hopes towards mildness, though perhaps we are only living in the fool's paradise of an intermission or an interglacial—and modern research reveals the traces of ages in which humidity has increased and waned and ages of comparative dryness and cold."

WELLS AND HUXLEY, VOL. II, P. 811.

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SOMETIME

Chapter One

IN NEW KHARTOUM

AND that, my friends, was the end of the Old World,—
destitution, disease, violence, confusion—chaos!” The
speaker paused after each sharp word to let its im-
plications sink into the consciousness of his hearers, while a
grave smile flickered over his thin lips. “An unimaginable
state of affairs to us, so much needless human misery, such
waste and desolation in the midst of plenty,—such an un-
reasonable conclusion to the immense efforts of humanity in
preceding ages! . . . For the dissolution of the old order was
NOT caused by the advance of the Ice Cap over the more
thickly populated parts of the earth as has so often been taken
for granted. Historical and archæological researches have
definitely proved that the social cataclysm at the end of the
so-called Christian era anticipated by at least a number of
decades those cosmic changes which closed one period of our
earth’s history, erasing most of the vaunted creations of man-
kind and transforming the appearance of the globe into what
we know today, on land and sea.”

The old man wheeling alertly at this point swept an arm
towards the two colored relief maps which had just been pro-
jected upon the blank wall behind him.

“To the left you see a fair representation of the earth’s
surface as it appeared to the human eye about the middle of
the twentieth century of the Xian era, with its two unequal
masses of land, its mountain ranges, rivers, lakes, seas—and

so forth. To the right is a map of our world brought up to date, with what information we have so far been able to glean about the forgotten western hemisphere, which still remains very largely *terra incognita* to us because as you know until comparatively recently the more northern parts have lain under a heavy coating of ice—just as what was once Europe is still buried beneath glaciers.”

“We’ll soon find out what North America is like,” a youthful voice interposed. The lecturer smiled at this sally and the ripple of laughter from the circle of his auditors that accompanied it.

“Don’t anticipate, Paul,” the old man admonished. “In due time nothing on our earth, I trust, will be unknown, unused. But today the future is not my subject. Rather the historic past, out of which we have moved to the present. . . . Compare our own continent—Africa—in the two pictures,” he resumed. “Before the coming of the Ice Age that was its approximate appearance as far as the limited knowledge of what men then called the Dark Continent went! . . . There was a vast desert across the northern part where the Sahara Sea is now. . . . Here was the site of Khartoum on the old maps,—a dot between the Blue and the White Nile, on the very edge of the desert, known to civilized men even at the end of the Christian era mainly because it had once been the scene of one of those barbarous conflicts between native African peoples and invading and proselytizing whites from the North. As many of you doubtless are aware, almost where we are sitting was the old Arab village of Omdurman, headquarters of the Mahdi, so-called false prophet, while a scant three miles eastward on the shore of our beautiful Blue Lake was the miserable mud village occupied by the Englishman Gordon and his followers, where he met his death from the spears of the natives. It is all so utterly different in appearance today

that neither Gordon nor Kitchener, who was sent to avenge his murder upon the Mahdi's followers, if they looked in upon us this afternoon, could possibly recognize their Khartoum. Part of those vast changes have been caused by the geologic convulsions following the recent Ice Age, which among other details linked our Sahara to the Atlantic and restored the former bridge between northern Africa and Italy. But even more considerable have been the changes due to the work of men, to the gradual transformation wrought by succeeding generations as they have planted and watered and built, and I hardly need to add, to the subtler, infinitely more important change worked in humanity itself, in our mentality, during these ten centuries since modern men first raised their heads and surveyed the wreckage of their world."

The lecturer paused at the climax of his thought, and then as the illumined maps faded from the wall turned and with a new intensity in his tone continued,—

"Yes! These changes within us have been immense, of far greater significance than anything that the last Ice Age has done to the earth! These profound changes of mentality, of human consciousness, verily of our beings, are the theme of these talks which you have asked me to deliver on the eve of the departure of our first exploratory expedition to the sites of the forgotten continent, where we expect to uncover in all its detail the civilization of one of the more advanced peoples of the old world. What we shall find there in the subterranean recesses of those ancient cities, in the masses of concrete and iron—for they were great builders—and the rusted remains of their famous machines, all now lying buried beneath mounds of earth and great forests, will be of interest to us chiefly as indicating the contrasts between the sort of mind that made them, that put its faith in them, and our own mentality. To

prepare you for what will there become apparent I am talking to you."

He paused to select his point of attack, and presently went on,—

"One of their favorite aphorisms in those last days before the collapse, when the end of their troubled world was plainly discernible, in the time of dissolution itself, was, 'Human nature being as it is,' which meant weak, vicious, uncertain. A doleful apology for every form of human incompetence, irresponsibility, folly! It was a thousand times worse than the habit of their more primitive ancestors, who put all their failures and tribulations to the account of some malignant God! . . . 'Human nature being as it is, forever and ever,' " the old man's voice whined ironically.

"As if they knew—had ever made the least attempt to divine what human nature might become! Well, we moderns have been demonstrating now for nearly a thousand years what that selfsame despised human nature is capable of accomplishing under direction, with the stimulus of fresh conceptions, with the infinite goal of perfection always on the horizon of men's minds. And we have hardly begun the story. It will take our human race many more thousands of years to explore the unknown possibilities of the human mind and the human spirit! For our motto has been 'Human nature as it may become' and 'Life as it might be,' with enormous variety, perpetual change, for thousands upon thousands of years yet to come on this planet—and who knows? even in other worlds beyond our present reach! Keep then this profound distinction in your minds, while we examine the nature of that old abortive civilization that went down into such depths of degradation and human misery before its wretched remains were almost completely obliterated beneath the glaciers of the recent Ice Age! For it is the master key to the culture of that

strange civilization, more removed from us in spirit than even in time and circumstance. . . . 'Human nature being as it is.' That false litany wails through all the written records of those final catastrophes which have come down to us! . . .

"Remember it was not the approach of ice, nor any other cosmic incident that wrecked the old so-called Xian civilization, any more than the preceding civilizations known to the men of that day. Mankind had arrived so nearly at the point (barring a few unessential problems of technique which doubtless their clever scientists and engineers would have solved in a short while) where we are ourselves in control of human environment that if they had but wanted to—if they had had the firm united will—they could have abolished want, famine, practically controlled all disease, done most of what modern man has accomplished in the last ten centuries. Even forewarned as they were of the glacial period they might have avoided much of the wholesale extinction caused by it by taking measures in time to transfer the bulk of their populations and their enterprises to the equatorial zone from which man first emerged. . . .

"Instead, just what did they do, at the apogee of their powers, when they had already successfully tapped the riches of their earth, and begun to explore scientifically its enormous possibilities? They indulged in one horrible war after another, three great bloodlettings within the space of sixty years: first the Crusade of 1914-1918, called the 'War to End War,' next the war of the Orient, when the western white peoples stood supinely aside in the illusion that it would be well for them if the yellow races exterminated each other, and lastly the greatest and most destructive of all wars, between East and West—the 'War to End Civilization,' as it might be called. The yellow peoples armed with all the ingenious technical contrivances of white men's science, with all the weapons

forged by the so-called superior races, turned these instruments of destruction upon their inventors (already weakened by their own strifes) and practically annihilated them. Those who escaped the flood of poison gases and disease germs let loose from the sky by the 'yellow devils,' as the miserable white men called the invaders, fled from their desolate cities which had become pestiferous morgues and eked out a wretched existence in remote wilds, hiding in caves and scratching the ground for sustenance like their prehistoric ancestors, until the increasing cold of the northern hemisphere drove these refugees southwards into the tropics. . . . From those demoralized refugees many of our best stocks owe their blond coloring and other racial characters. . . .

"A tragic epos! It all happened within a brief two hundred years of time as man reckons time. Those machines of which they were so inordinately proud—they themselves called their last degraded epoch 'the machine age' and never dreamed of anything better—did nothing to avert the tragedy they had enabled man to make so thoroughgoing. In fact there were a few among their own commentators who held that it was man's insane infatuation for machines and the sort of life created by the machine that mainly brought about his ultimate downfall. Man made the machine to be his servant, but quickly it became his master, and men by the millions became the slaves of machines. There are some who believe that if twentieth century mankind had been able to control the output of the machines, the end of the story might have been far different from what it was. But I think not. The disease was deeper; the machine was but one of its symptoms. Men could not control themselves nor the sort of society that they had organized: it got beyond them. They thought their particular social order was divine, unchangeable, but it was man-made and like everything made by men ephemeral and defec-

tive, doomed to destruction unless constantly controlled and modified, energized by fresh spirit. But the spirit of humanity had become stale, as well as cowardly and cruel: it had turned in upon itself and festered. . . .

“That was the ultimate cause of their downfall. It was not the work of natural forces—of any God—but of man himself, of what he had let himself become, which destroyed him and most of his works. Remember that! In the midst of plenty, in this beautiful world with all its possibilities opening before them, men went out to kill each other and to destroy all they had created, all that had been their inheritance from past ages. The most colossal tragedy of recorded time! No wonder that our writers and our painters and musicians choose that act of suicide as their supreme theme, only equaled in interest by that other theme of the rebirth of the world after the retreat of the Ice Cap.” . . .

The old man having touched the height of his thought dismissed his audience abruptly with a wave of his arm. “Enough for today!”

He leaned down to pat the head of a large fawn-colored dog that had unobtrusively entered the room and taken a position in front of his master as if to remind him that the sun was falling athwart the greensward outside and that it was time to come out of doors. The group of men and women of different ages who had been listening to the old man moved slowly from the room through the openings in the wall made by rolling up compactly the flexible glazed partitions of the room, exposing to view a small grassy court in which a fountain trickled into a large marble basin. Around the edge of this marble basin some of the audience lingered in talk while others drifted off into the great recreation park below. . . .

The old man carrying over one arm his white silk robe

seated himself on the edge of the basin to rest and enjoy the refreshing coolness of the hour. Spare, erect, with close-cropped hair and beard he looked to be nearer fifty than ninety-three years, which was his age. Yet it was only on occasions like this requiring some special effort that he felt fatigue. All his life he had adapted his activities so nicely to his physical power that he had not yet been obliged to surrender any of his interests. "Wearing out" was a distressing anachronism in the new world. . . .

The old man conversed with those who lingered near him in the mood of ironic gayety that was habitual with him. . . .

"Yes, I hit them hard," he said in response to some observation. "It has been the sentimental fashion latterly to condone the faults of those wrong-headed peoples, to make all kinds of excuses for their perverse blindness, their paralysis of will, their insane doctrine of self-interest. . . . But why? Of course from their own point of view they were justified in all the mischiefs they did to themselves, but hardly from ours. . . . Their boasting was as bad as their rationalization, simply incredible! The old records give me a queasy feeling in the pit of my stomach, just reading their own accounts of themselves, so full of empty self-praise, so complacent and back patting! Especially their so-called leaders, their big business men and politicians, their publicists and journalists. They were always pretending, always putting the blame for their own follies on somebody else's back. . . . It does me good occasionally to free my mind about our forebears of the great Industrial Epoch. Besides I feel it is well that some of our young people who have notions that things with us don't go as brilliantly as they might should learn how it was in those old days of what they called 'liberty' and 'freedom.'"

The old man let an arm fall affectionately on the handsome youth who had interrupted his lecture.

"I suspect that Paul doesn't find their push and swagger and eternal talk of individualism and national egoisms and all that patriotic bunk so unreasonable, eh, Paul?"

"We must grant them their point of view," the young man retorted primly.

"But why should I grant them their point of view when I know what a mess they made of their world with it! Their 'point of view' as you are pleased to call their insanity led them and nearly a billion and a half of their fellows down a steep place into the abyss—which was plain enough for the more intelligent among them to perceive a good fifty years before the final catastrophe. . . . It would not have been polite to tell them all I think of them and their selfish obsessions if they could hear my words. But now that they have become the dust of the dust, blown about the universe for a thousand years and more, why should I respect their feelings? I am sure they never would have respected mine, had I been alive then and dared to proclaim aloud what I thought of their terrible civilization within the hearing of their leading people. You know what they did to all who did not agree with them or at least keep their mouths shut? Torture and prison and death, at the very best social isolation and destitution awaited anybody reckless enough to express doubt as to the sacredness of common beliefs, such as the inviolability of personal property, the obligation of fighting whenever one's own country got the killing fever, and all the rest of their sacred cows. It was far better, on my word, when men were less civilized, when they burned and tortured under the influence of mistaken religious notions: at least they did their dirty work in the name of their God about whom they had very little exact knowledge, not in the holy name of private property! No, I will not 'grant them their point of view,' however clearly I recognize what caused it."

The dark young man sat silent, scowling to himself. Next him a fair-haired girl, one of the few blond types in the audience, ventured to defend him.

"I think Paul means that the people of those times felt they were right in what they did, in urging everybody to get what he could for himself, and to fight his neighbors if they happened to live outside the national compound."

"They were conditioned—just as we are today!" Paul asserted.

"And how are we conditioned today, young man?" old Felix demanded quickly.

"By every idea that passes through our minds. These have all been instilled in us by tradition, by teaching and propaganda. You know what I mean. You are one of the most powerful agents of the collective idea, as you often assert. Our modern world is a subtle tyranny!"

"Indeed—a tyranny of good ideas, let us say."

"But some of us would like occasionally to do the running and change the dominant ideas!"

"Such as?"

The young man became silent, perhaps abashed by his daring in thus bearding the most notable person in Khartoum, in Africa, possibly in the entire world. The girl at his side, reddening under her tan as only a blonde could blush, interposed.

"Paul means that some of us young people would like to decide for ourselves certain things, whether we should or should not have children, whether a larger increase in the birth rate should be permitted, more colonies established in new places. . . . We are Expansionists!" she concluded proudly, lifting her dark eyes to meet the old man's amused smile.

"So, Alisa, you are an Expansionist? You would like to have

more babies born into this world this year and more the next and so on—do you understand where that would lead?”

“But we needn’t go as far as they did in those old times—have more children than could be properly looked after. . . . But we are a long way from that situation at present!”

“What with this new continent to be opened up to settlement and the expected shrinking of the Ice Cap from northern Europe and Asia there will be all the land needed for new colonies, indefinitely,” Paul put in.

“So you think we are not going fast enough in re-peopling the earth?”

The young couple nodded and Alisa observed softly,—

“That’s why we are Expansionists.”

“I see!” The old man smiled noncommittally while his eyes examined the girl’s white tunic which did not have the thin thread of gold around the neck, the insignia adopted by those young women who had obtained the permit necessary for childbearing. “I see,” he repeated in a gentle murmur.

The girl blushed more deeply under his glance with a mutinous, half-frightened expression in her dark eyes. The young man, as though to cover up his companion’s embarrassment, returned to the argument,—

“With all our new sources of food supply and the success of aerial transport the globe could easily support in modern conditions twice its present population, without even touching the new lands. In a few years if what everybody says about the richness of that forgotten continent proves true, why, there could be three or four times as many people living. And there are all the possibilities of new inventions, and the likelihood that some day we shall find our way out into the heavens and discover some other habitable planet to—”

“What should we do with all those added billions of human lives?” the old man demanded, as if he had inserted a knife

blade into the mounting enthusiasm of the youth. . . . "Of course we could contrive to pack five times—perhaps by squeezing and crowding as they did in the old world, as many as ten times—the present number of lives. But just where would be the advantage?"

"At least it would give more of us the chance to live our lives as we want to!" the young man exclaimed.

"I doubt that! Have you studied the vital statistics of the old régime? Do you believe that the vast majority of persons in those older societies lived the kind of lives they wanted? Think of the constant lack of employment, and consequently of food, of the millions that even in their prosperous times existed on the edge of starvation, the uncertainty that most of them had to endure—"

"But we have learned to manage better than they did, as I have heard you say often."

"No doubt, thanks largely to the will not to allow too many lives to come into being. . . . But even if we could manage to give everyone a fairly decent existence—which the old world never succeeded in doing—what do you think would be the gain in having, say, five or ten billions of human beings on this globe (or scattered about in nearby planets!) where we now have less than half a billion, all properly cared for?"

The young man was baffled and relapsed into silence, while the girl remarked accusingly,—

"We thought you would be with us! Why have you worked so hard for the Exploratory Expedition to the new continent?"

The old man, whose tone had been friendly, paternal and jocose, became suddenly grave. Looking steadfastly at the eager young faces gathered about him he pronounced slowly:

"Because, I suppose, I am not an Expansionist as you call it! Certainly not in Paul's sense. I don't believe in the unregulated free breeding of human beings in the old loose way, the

animal way, with the consequent deterioration of the race, and all the inevitable misery and degradation for multitudes of individual lives in order that a few may flower out of their wretchedness, that such a haphazard method of reproduction would mean now, as it meant in the past. I do not believe in the multiplying of human lives on this earth like plants or insects just because we can manage somehow to give everybody enough to eat—if we could! That was the planless, fatalistic way of the old world, which our forefathers struggling upwards out of the chaos of the Ice Age were wise enough to reject. The increase of population cannot safely be left to chance, or Nature, as they used to call it!”

“Then why explore the new continent?”

“For many sufficient reasons. Not the least because it will afford future generations a stupendous example of what it is best not to do, if they wish to survive and go forward. What we shall uncover in those centers of American industrial civilization will be sufficiently horrible or fantastic, I expect, to quiet such restless dreams of personal liberty that you and Alisa and other young people are fond of indulging in. (For that reason I shall invite both of you to accompany me when I make the journey to old New York, to see for yourselves what happened there!) . . . *There* was a fine specimen of the hit-or-miss way of living, the animal kind of evolution with its wastes, cruelty and futility as inevitable accompaniments. In place of that brutal disorder we of the modern world have carried on at an ever accelerated pace an ordered evolution. We *know* where we are going and how to get there whether you happen to like it or not!”

The hound rose deliberately at this point and putting his forepaws on his master's shoulders looked fixedly at him as if to remind him that he was wasting time.

“Yes, Marco, we’ll go for our bath now,” the old man replied gently stroking the dog’s silky head. “Too many words as usual!”

Throwing over his shoulders the loose silk gown which he had been carrying the old man walked through the flower beds of the court to a low flight of steps that led to the Park below. Pausing momentarily before descending he gazed thoughtfully over the extended view, which at this time of day with the sun sinking into a golden haze over the broken lines of city roofs in the distance was entrancing. A cool breeze coming from the north across the lake ruffled the tops of the huge liveoaks that irregularly dotted the Park. Pointing to one of the largest of the oaks he remarked casually,—

“That marks the site of what was once the Mahdi’s tomb. You know when the English under Kitchener defeated his Arab followers they rifled the prophet’s tomb, cut the head from the body, which they threw into the Nile, and carried off the head to their museum in London. They pretended that this piece of savage violence was done to convince the prophet’s deluded followers that he was a false prophet, mortal like themselves, and thus cure them of ‘fanaticism.’ But I take it that their act merely exemplified the brutal atavism of even the superior types of humanity in those days. The English repeated it many times, at Amritsar in India for one. It was ineradicably of the nature of conquerors always. . . . All that distant part of the Park where the exercise fields are now was once a sandy island between the two rivers. After the English had reconquered this land from the Mahdi’s followers they ruled it through the connivance of certain Arab chieftains whom they ennobled. One of them—Sir Aga Khan I think he was called—lived on that island, exacting tribute from his countrymen, taking his toll of their flocks and herds as the price of protecting them from their masters. He used to sit on

the terrace of his English house and watch his sheep and goats water at the river."

Indulging in historical reminiscence the old man proceeded slowly along the shaded path that wound downwards towards the Blue Lake. . . .

"That is the story of 'imperialism' as they called it everywhere, although they glossed it over with many fine phrases. The English were not interested in the old Arabs, nor in their land except what they could get out of it for themselves. What they wanted in this arid desert of Africa as it then was before we changed its climate and topography was control of the River Nile to fertilize their cotton plantations between the two rivers and down below in ancient Egypt. . . . Water was more precious than diamonds and rubies in this country as it was then: they who controlled the Nile ruled this section of Africa and its peoples. You would not care to repeat that story, would you, Paul, if you had supreme power? It was not merely the story of Africa: it was the same in all parts of the world under the rule of individualism and chance! Rape, conquest, slavery for the weak, the rule of the strong or 'the survival of the fittest' as they learned to call it, excusing their evil actions."

"One does not have to repeat ancient tribal morals in a more enlightened age," observed the young man.

"Ah, when the world gets crowded with too many individuals each seeking his own life without regard for the whole that is inevitable I am afraid. There are always—at least there were in the old savage 'state of nature'—so many weak and defenseless, so few strong! It was always so even under the most enlightened governments, even between peoples of the same blood and tradition. Have you ever studied the records of the Machine Age, with the immense factories, furnaces, mines, and moving platforms? *There* was a slavery worse than anything the followers of the Mahdi ever knew!"

As they were speaking they were overtaken by a battalion of the labor units coming into the city from work in the outlying sections, at the airports and the industrial laboratories. Young men and women between the ages of twenty and thirty-five were loping along the broad path in a kind of march rhythm, singing and beating their hands in time to the song set by their leaders, as though they had come from some form of sport. The old man's face relaxed over this apt illustration of his thesis.

"I'll wager one never saw that sort of thing under the old régime!" he chuckled.

The young man who had but recently completed his labor service admitted the claim frankly,—

"No, one doesn't read in the old records of much that was enjoyable about necessary labor. Mostly drudge for pay, or bribed by special privileges."

"Their religion had a fable about work being a curse imposed upon humanity because of the sin of their first progenitors—which showed what they thought of labor, something hateful and degrading that everybody tried to escape from if they could."

"Except the big fellows on top!"

"Yes," the old man agreed, "the head men got what rewards there were."

The labor battalion passed on towards the Lake, while old Felix rested under the shade of the Mahdi's oak and spoke aloud his musing thoughts,—

"In those early days this delightful Park around the mud village of Omdurman was merely a gleaming desert of sand over which there grew occasionally after light rains a sparse herbage on which their hungry flocks nibbled. Although the English watered their cotton fields nearby with water filched from the river nobody thought of transforming the desert as

a whole and making an agreeable and fertile country of the Sudan, as it is today. Nature helped, of course, by turning the great northern desert into an inland lake at the time when it again joined Europe with Africa. But the intelligence of man and his labor has largely performed the miracle that you see. The painstaking and purposeful toil of generations went to the making of fertility, salubrity, beauty, where there had been little but ugliness and human chaos. For modern men are not content to be the victims of their environment: they will what that environment shall be. In that rests all the distinction between the old world with its notions of fate, imperialism, individualism, laissez-faire, and the rest of their superstitions and our own orderly evolving civilization!"

The old man's long vision seemed to transform the lovely expanse of parkland before their eyes into what it once had been,—what, were it not for the incessant intelligence and watchful care and unremitting toil of succeeding generations, would quickly revert to its former stark and savage state of desert, as had been the fate of so much once habitable land upon the globe.

If that is what Expansion should come to mean, the old man seemed to be thinking, if free breeding and the occupation of new lands should lead the race back to the savage competition of group with group, individual with individual, to devastating wars, slaughters, famines, pestilence—as always in the past—better that the Ice Cap should remain forever over those northern lands, that instead of retreating it should extend its tentacles downwards to the Equator itself and exterminate under its immense glaciers the last remnants of human life, proved incapable of self-direction, self-salvation! . . . The new order had taken ten centuries to recreate itself, building bit by bit on the ruins of the old wherever found, reforming human destiny. Yet all this might within the space of one brief

lifetime be destroyed as civilization was destroyed at the end of the Xian era before the coming of the Ice Age. And how many more thousands of years might it not require to regain what modern man had now attained—if ever! . . .

Nodding to his young followers as if at the triumphant demonstration of a favorite theorem the old man quickened his pace, his dog running about him in great circles over those sand hills where old Sir Aga Khan once had pastured his flocks while he dealt with the lordly Englishmen who held his people in bondage.

As he drew nearer to the Lake which now gleamed through a fringe of flowering acacia trees, there came from across the water the sounds of stringed instruments making a music so diffused in the light air that it was impossible to tell just where the orchestra was placed. Softer, then louder, now as if the strains fell from the sky above, then afar off, the agreeable sounds penetrated the evening atmosphere, as much a part of it as the scent of acacia blossoms. Groups of people were already engaged on their evening meal under the trees by the lakeside, while others strolling in from every quarter dropped their garments on the sandy beach and plunged into the still water whose surface had become saffron color. There were naked bodies of every shade of color from amber brown and glossy black to white, indicating a variegated racial inheritance. No one appeared in the least conscious of body or color or class, all being absorbed in the enjoyment of the moment.

The old man loosened his tunic and stepped into the water with his dog, no notice being taken of him. Boys and girls, young men and women, frolicked about, churning up the amber-colored water, or darted off in impromptu races towards one of the low wooded islands that dotted the Lake. Others left the water, dried themselves leisurely in the last rays of

the sun filtering through the trees, and after donning their simple garments strolled over to the food booths to select the dishes they preferred for the evening meal.

The food was served by a special detachment of the labor bands, boys and girls, whose assignment was in this department. The custom of communal feeding was so prevalent that it no more occurred to anyone to desire a private kitchen and food supply, than it would have occurred to an ancient Christian to want his own gasoline pump. The very old and the sick were cared for in special establishments: all others ate wherever their tasks might take them. The supply of food in abundance and great variety was universal and free as air or light. The inhabitants of Khartoum preferred to take their evening meal, which was the most substantial of the day, beside the Lake after their bath. . . .

Old Felix who was expecting a friend to arrive shortly on the evening airliner from the East watched different groups of bathers as they entered and left the water. They came from many different human stocks, African, European, Asiatic. Thanks to the facilities of swift easy communication between different regions of the globe, modern people had the habit of moving about freely, settling temporarily wherever their interests led them at the moment, and mating freely with each other.

The mingling of different peoples during the century of migration before the oncoming ice had done much to break down racial prejudices and begin the merging of stocks that had persisted ever since. Thus the old world superstitions about race had completely disappeared from human consciousness. Indeed, the ideal of the pure race had been hardly more than an aristocratic prejudice during the declining epoch of late Christianity, although clung to stubbornly by some as a mark

of superiority. Its unreality had long been known to biologists and those who were scientifically minded.

Fortunately the new world was unhampered by this delusion of the pure race, and in fact progressive centers such as modern Khartoum prided themselves on their intricately mingled stocks. Old Felix himself among the many genes in his blood had two quite different inheritances: his mother's line from western Africa beyond the Sahara Sea and his father's from one of the smaller Greek islands. Neither of these, however, was pure in the old sense—how many minor crossings there had been in his ancestry it would be impossible to tell (as in reality had been the case with members of the most exclusive clans in the old world). Descent in the old family sense no longer counted for social prestige, while inheritance in the biologic meaning had become of enormous importance, i.e., a proved freedom from any taint of disease or inadequacy.

Alisa had failed thus far to win her right to maternity because she could not establish an unblemished record of four generations. Her paternal grandfather, of Teutonic extraction, had developed symptoms of insanity in middle life (because of which he had, quite voluntarily, chosen to enter the lethal chamber) and her mother had been segregated because of immorality, having borne a child while still formally mated to a youth who had not won his permit. So while Paul had passed all the rigorous tests required for parenthood Alisa whom he loved would have to be sterilized before living with him, and thus become an unequal partner.

Unions between unequals, in this sense only, were often happy, but there was for both man and woman always the danger that the mate denied parenthood might later prefer another union with the expectation of children. That risk was, however, no greater than what many had taken successfully and would always be taken by those ardently in love with each

other, desire for the one mate being stronger than the diffused desire for unrealized offspring. . . .

There was no less affection for children in the modern world than in older societies, rather a stronger, more universal love because of their greater rarity and the highly prized distinction of having them. Yet all children now seemed to belong to the community as a whole as well as to their special parents. As had been the case with so many private possessions of the old order the child had been merged into the common interest (as with some primitive peoples) receiving care and attention from the entire group. With the decline of the private ownership fetish that had once covered every aspect of life from marriage to shirt studs, tyrannously, the powerful instinct of possessive parenthood—a most useful bond in the old forms of society—had gradually relaxed. Many children especially after the first months of infancy were brought up by others than their own parents, for one reason or another. And the child-hungry woman had little difficulty in gratifying her passion for maternity without endangering the strict hygienic control of society by conceiving and giving birth to dubious or inferior offspring of her own body. . . .

Felix refreshed by his bath sat on one of the park benches contemplating the animated scene along the lake front. It was the common hour of relaxation from every form of effort, and no one seemed too tired or too sophisticated to enjoy its simple pleasures. . . . The old scholar whose mind was richly stored with pictures of other, less favored forms of civilization, contrasted the naturalness of the nude bathers, the free intermingling of all ages and kinds of people here on the beach with the oppressive self-consciousness of older times. Many inhibitions had been eradicated from human beings, largely because of the simplicity of the way of living; individuals were free,

light-hearted and gay, like healthy children, and like normal children found a spontaneous and joyous interest in everything they did. There was no cause for worry, in fact. Food and shelter was abundant and free to all, like light and air. Occupation was universal, unhurried, uncompelled, and nicely fitted to the needs and the tastes of the individual. In fact life itself, as the old man musingly saw it from the vantage of his crowded years, was one long tapestry on which was unrolled in continuity a charming story. One woke to a succession of peaceful busy summer days.

“They don’t think so much about themselves—that is the strongest note of distinction between that dreary old world and our happy modern one! We are not shut up within ourselves as in so many separate prisons, to which we have been condemned for life to solitary confinement. . . . Only the greatest and the simplest human beings could escape that prisoned existence under the conditions in which they lived their lives, of fear, envy, competition. One must be ‘born again’ with them to enter into a natural freedom, while these days everybody is born at once into a total absence of self-consciousness, into harmony with himself. A happy people!” . . .

Suddenly there appeared on the eastern horizon a glow, like a large luminous torch balancing the descending sun which was about to disappear over the western rim of the world. Momentarily it became more brilliant like an approaching meteor drawing downwards in a magnificent fiery arc towards the earth. It was the China mail, a huge airliner that circled the globe westwards in time with the rotation of the earth. It was both the most rapid and the most dependable form of transportation thus far perfected and for long distance journeys had largely taken the place of the earlier, clumsier, and slower electric-driven airships.

The old man like the thousands along the Lake front gazed

admiringly at the approaching ship. Majestically it crossed the Lake far above their heads showering light upon the bobbing bodies of the bathers like another sun and settled to earth in a big basin of the airport beyond the Lake. Soon the sky above the airport became alive with small balloon-shaped flying boats, the airtaxis that transported the passengers on the great airliner into the city. One of these settled like a butterfly near the old man and out of it stepped a tall woman who waved a knotted scarf in greeting to Felix.

"Here I am!" she announced.

"On time to the very second, to use the old formula."

"So meaningless when one is time itself in these new liners! One doesn't have to carry a watch or even look at the sun," she continued gayly. "It is as much of a convenience as the new cellulose clothes one can pack in a handkerchief and pick up anywhere so that you don't have to carry bags about with you. That held everything I needed on this week's trip!" She held up a thin reticule such as women once used to carry their handkerchiefs and vanity cases in.

"Do you remember the pictures of arriving and departing travelers in the days of steamships? Such mountains of luggage! The ancients were so wedded to personal possessions that they had to carry trunkfuls of useless things around with them just to show they had them. Before that time they even had their favorite belongings buried with them! . . . Well, what sort of voyage?"

"Oh, perfect. We left old Shanghai this morning, had tea at Bombay, and here I am—all there was to that! . . . That is a nice odor!"

She filled her nostrils with the scent of new-mown hay which was coming strongly from across the water on the light evening breeze.

"He is a real artist, our atmosphere man! One misses his

skillful touch out there in Asia or perhaps the sense of smell is as undeveloped or as perversely developed as their sense of sound: they still create those squeaky symphonies with the knife-edge split notes that make your backbone shiver."

"Perhaps that's what they like doing most, to make one's flesh creep. They always were an odd people from an occidental point of view, although they have been catching up these last few hundred years. We must give them time."

"They'll need it! . . . Where shall we sup?"

"On the island?"

The woman nodded, and they stepped quickly into a small shallow water boat that ran as if self-directed, its dial having been set, towards the point of a low wooded island. The sun having dropped below the horizon had left behind a broad orange stripe across the western sky, into which the great airliner having taken on westbound passengers was rising slowly, majestically, prepared to speed on after its magnet, the sun.

"Such a beautiful sight!" the woman remarked, her face smiling like a child's over a strange toy. "I can never get over the wonder of them, rising so softly like a bird as if one had merely to express the will to mount into the heavens. And their luminous bodies are like great glowing torches in the sky! . . . We *are* something, we moderns," she murmured exultantly as her face gradually relapsed into calm. "When one thinks how mankind used to go about their errands in stuffy trains or shut into nasty rocking steamships!" . . .

"Well?" the old man demanded after a time, "what have you to tell me, Veronica?"

"So much, Felix! But I must have a plunge first, I feel so sticky after a whole day in an airboat. They keep it pleasantly cool but one can't bathe, just sponge off in ether spirits."

As she talked she unconcernedly stripped off her clothes, which merely involved untying a few knots here and there, letting the slight garments fall about her feet. While Felix slowed the boat she stood on the covered prow prepared to dive. Against the yellow sunset light her firm white flesh gleamed with a tint of old ivory, very becoming with her curly chestnut hair. Her limbs were long and rounded,—the body of a mature middle-aged woman about fifty years of age, still fit and pleasing, neither bulging with fat nor sallow with artificial leanness. (The naked body of an average middle-aged woman of the late Christian era would have been considered a disgrace in modern Khartoum!)

With the nonchalant gesture of a sportive child just out of school Veronica took a light leap into the water, holding her legs close together so that they seemed to flash as they disappeared beneath the surface of the Lake. Coming up some distance from the craft she floated lazily contemplative, winding her hair away from her face. After a few moments she swam back to the boat and skillfully lifting herself astride the bow sat there wiping the drops of water from her smooth skin with her hands as a kitten might wash its face.

Felix gazed at her admiringly. She was so natural and unconscious in her loveliness, so powerful and alive! Her face was in repose, peaceful, contented, her tawny eyes reaching upwards in the direction of the disappearing airliner which now had risen to such a height that its luminous surface had caught the sun's rays. Veronica's smiling face expressed her joy in it, in life.

"It's nice to feel good soft water once more," she remarked dabbling her toes in the Lake. "They don't seem to know how to make pleasant swimming places in China—they haven't any instinct for Water . . . and one wonders whether they are careful about disinfecting it regularly."

The old man reached over to the control and started the little boat, then lightly touched the woman's head.

"You are so lovely, Veronica! . . . It always comes over me with fresh surprise and delight every time I see you like this."

The woman thus brought back suddenly to self-consideration smiled mischievously, retorting,—

"You should have seen me twenty years ago, Felix. *Then* I was worth remembering!"

"No doubt you were marvelous in your blooming period. But being long past that age myself I prefer you just as you are today, with your firm flesh and ampler form,—the abundance and assurance of maturity. . . . The old world literature, their novels and plays, made too much of unripe fruit. They must have been written for boys and girls, mainly. Reading them you would think that only youth possessed the power of emotion. While you and I know that the most interesting and vital emotions come with maturity, ripeness!"

"That is true!"

"We are like that airship and the sun, you and I: we keep in due relation to each other!"

"Which one is the sun?" she retorted in the same bantering tone, while she took from her bag a little roll of thin material, which being shaken out developed into a filmy silk garment of violet hue. Drawing it over her head she asked,—“How do you like the color? They still make the best silk in China, and these new paper weight garments are such a comfort!” Gathering up her discarded costume she touched a match to it; it disappeared instantaneously.

"I think if one took a poll of women as to the greatest improvement in modern life over the old times they would all declare it was the abolition of laundry! Think of messing about with dirty linen, even with a machine! Think of wearing anything next one's skin twice!" . . .

The little boat skimmed in close to a wharf and the two established themselves in a chalet built out over the water and presently were supping on a new kind of melon recently introduced and an ice, while from thickets on the island behind them came the songs of birds mingling with the lap of little waves beneath. The birds answered one another as if trained to sing in chorus which was in fact partly true. For instead of exterminating song birds modern society made a great effort to encourage them by feeding and protecting them and also training the young at certain periods and accustoming them to sing together. The Bird Choir Master was one of the lesser functionaries of every considerable center. . . .

"It is so nice to be back!" Veronica exclaimed, pushing aside her slice of melon. "It is all very well to carry heaven within you as you are always saying, and it is interesting to see new people, new places, and to discover how other peoples are working out their lives under different conditions. I am a good anarchist at heart, but I like my own corner of anarchy best and always shall."

"That merely proves that you fit well into your corner. . . . But, Veronica, at heart you will never become a perfect anarchist: somewhere within you there is too much primitive woman! You might easily revert to the fireside and children and everybody-in-the-place-God-called-him-to of some remote English ancestor."

Veronica made a face.

"You too like our old Khartoum pretty well!" she retorted.

"Of course! Haven't I lived and worked here fifty years of my life? It is, after all, the best corner of the modern world,—most even climate, the most alert people, the—"

"Yes," Veronica mocked, "the most enlightened and venturesome and progressive center of the New World, the inhabitants most unlike the peoples of Northern Europe and America at

the end of the Christian era,—all that thanks in good part to the exertions of our Greek Felix. . . . I agree with you. . . . But all the same even we are far from perfect . . . our anarchist ideal may have a jolt one of these days.”

“It has had them every day since the Ice Age, but somehow it survives them all. It works, as they used to say, better and better all the time. . . . What success did you have?”

“I brought back a good bunch—darlings some of them, lovely little Japanese and Ceylonese. You must come over to the college and see them. I am sure they will be all the rage. Such gentle dainty little women—the boys will be crazy about them. . . . But that is not all I saw. One learns more than one’s business going about in strange places as I did. Felix, you stay here in Khartoum too much, you don’t know what is stirring in the world outside.”

“Don’t I? They flock here by the thousands from every corner of the globe. Half the people I meet every day come from some other place than Khartoum. And there are all the foreign members of the control and consultation boards dropping in for our monthly meetings, to air their new ideas!”

“But meeting people that way, selected ones, who come for some special purpose isn’t the same thing as living with them in their own homes and watching the ordinary things that happen. Of course they all know you, admire you and your work, and they let you believe that everything is lovely, smooth-running—and that everybody thinks as you do!”

“Well? don’t they?” the old man queried smiling at his companion’s vehemence.

“Not always! . . . For one thing India is reverting,—too many babies, subsistence level deteriorating. I suspect their new control board is lax. There seem to me to be too large a percentage of birth permits, and many of the women are too young, below the minimum age of eighteen years for child-

bearing we set a hundred years ago. . . . And China has not yet rid itself of the strong man idea, the celestial ruler and all that nonsense. Their new enclaves in North China and east of Turkestan are like primitive tribal bands, a one-man boss affair. The next thing we know they will be enslaving the women and fighting among themselves up there. The old bosses rule with a hard hand and the young people sneak away into new wild lands and nobody knows what they do off in the mountains by themselves. I suspect there isn't much sterilization or restriction of population or birth permits in those remote corners."

The old man's face became graver.

"We shall have to consider what we can do to help those outlying districts. It is difficult to get the right ideas of control adopted at once in sparsely inhabited countries. We can have some of the leaders over for a talk and send some of our best young people over there to start colonies."

"That isn't enough! Even when they have been brought up here or in other advanced centers, once back among their own kind they so easily revert!"

"Oh, they'll swing into step in time," the old man said serenely and after a few minutes added,—“At any rate we can do nothing more even if we wanted to force them to our way of thinking in a hurry. Our modern world has been developed on the theory of no physical control, no force. Instead, we use only psychological methods. We know that the old order broke down under too much control, too much government. At the end it was all government, all rules and regulations and prohibitions that nobody minded! They called our method anarchy and would have hanged you or me as 'disturbers of order' had we dared to open our mouths in public. . . . Yet for all their laws and their discipline I dare say the modern world has never known as much disorder in its entire history

as any one of their big centers put up with every year,—what with killings, legal and illegal, kidnappings, thefts, and all the rest of their thousands of crimes and felonies. Confess, Veronica, that we are much better off even with a few sporadic cases of atavism on the outskirts of civilization!”

“Of course, I don’t want to see any Mussolinis or iron-fisted old-fashioned governments introduced into the modern world, with their broken laws and their corrupt brutal police forces and armies and hired thugs—of course not, never! But are you sure that revolt is confined to remote and less civilized parts of the world?”

“You mean the Expansion movement?”

Veronica nodded, while the old man related the incident at the afternoon’s lecture.

“Alisa is afraid that she may lose her man,” Veronica remarked and added thoughtfully,—“She is a fine girl, will make a splendid woman. I think in such cases some latitude might be permitted.”

“You mean that she should be allowed to go off to some place with her Paul and have whatever children came! My dear anarchist, isn’t that just what they are doing out in North Asia which you think so reprehensible? . . . Isn’t Alisa free to live with her Paul or any other young man she fancies as soon as she has been sterilized?”

“Of course—but you must make some allowance for woman’s strongest instinct!”

“Which is?”

“If she loves a man deeply she wants that man’s child above anything in the world. There is no escaping that fact!”

“Then she must take care to love only men fit to give her children and also herself be of the elect!”

“Ah, but we can’t all be of the elect!”

“No,” the old man admitted, realizing how deeply his com-

panion's protest went into her own experience. "That is fate. And fate cannot be entirely removed from man's life. . . . One must bow to fate when it is unkind—as you have done, my dear, and triumph over its limitations—as you have done, dear Veronica!"

They kept early hours in Khartoum (as they had in the old Arab town), as nearly sun time as was convenient, not liking to live by artificial light. So when Felix and his companion reached the landing stage there was nobody about; the streets of the city were silent as they threaded their way through the squares and porticoes and colonnades of the endlessly varied buildings. The sound of water was repeated from one fountain or cascade to the next and the scent of gardens from the inner courts of the houses mingled with the odor distributed from the central atmosphere station, which at this hour had been so reduced as to be scarcely perceptible.

Both knowing their way well turned instinctively where necessary, but the outer walls of the buildings being softly luminous lighted the open places with a subdued glow. As there was little wheel traffic within the city pavement was often replaced by turfed walks soft to the feet. . . . Gradually as they passed out of the center of the city the dwellings were spaced by large gardens arranged around inner courts. At one of these on the bank of the Blue Nile they entered and descended through outer courts to the river front where Felix's private apartments were built upon a terrace. These consisted of several large bare rooms, one of which was in the form of a loggia jutting out above the river itself, where he slept. From this loggia there was a wide view over the roofs of low buildings and across gardens and courts to a thick forest on the further side of the river.

For a man of Felix's occupations and interests there might seem a singular absence of books and of writing facilities, also

of ornaments and personal possessions. But his life was spent so largely outside his living apartment (as was the case with the ancient Athenians) that he had little need for the cluttered quarters of an old world habitation. Any book or pamphlet that he might wish to examine could be easily illuminated on one of the bare walls or be spoken in a natural voice from the central library some miles away. This modern library was merely a convenient stack room for innumerable reels and records with the attendants needed to care for them and operate them. One of the old man's secretaries brought to his eye or ear whatever he might wish to acquaint himself with. Thus the human eye, so badly overworked in ancient civilization (so that almost everybody must disfigure his face with glasses), was very largely relieved of the burden of gathering information and had regained a natural delicacy and acuteness of vision that only savage peoples had formerly possessed, while the mind having been trained to gather information through sound as well as sight had become remarkably attentive and retentive. . . .

The attendant in the outer court nodded to the old man when he entered, murmuring,—“Nothing important tonight,” which meant that from all parts of the civilized world nothing of any special interest had been gathered from the air since he had left his rooms early that morning, or had been already relayed to wherever he might have been at the moment.

Veronica saying that she was tired withdrew to her own apartment nearby, and Felix lay down on the couch in the loggia. Drawing over him a light rug he settled himself for rest. Although it was midnight and the city was stilled in sleep the old man lay awake. He rarely slept for more than three hours towards morning, feeling that so little time was left to him in life that he could not afford to waste it in vacant sleep. He lay watching the stars thickly set in the sky,

some in the eastern horizon seeming to hang among the branches of the forest so large and luminous they were. One of the much discussed projects of the day was a voyage of discovery among these distant worlds which undoubtedly would in time be accomplished when certain atmospheric difficulties had been overcome; there was little reason to believe they could not be surmounted.

But for the present generation the surging spirit of adventure must be assuaged by the Great Expedition to the forgotten continent with the promotion of which the old man had been closely identified. The primary object of the expedition was the exploration of the sites of American cities, and all the extensive remains of American culture which it was hoped might be found beneath the forests that now covered so much of the continent. This great archæological undertaking might very likely be the last considerable effort of the old man's busy life, fitly crowning the long series of researches into past forms of civilization which had been his life work. Now all the infinite details in preparation for such an expedition had been accomplished: the advance engineering units were already on the ground preparing to bore first into the labyrinth of old New York; all that remained was for him to start with his personal staff for the site of these excavations, within a few weeks. Yet just now doubts had begun to blur his purpose. This new spirit which he had already divined fermenting among his youthful fellow-workers and which Veronica informed him had in other forms reached to remote corners of the world disturbed him more than he had admitted to Veronica.

The exploration of the long lost continent was to these restless spirits less a scientific expedition for the enlargement of knowledge about a past epoch of human evolution than an ordinary exploratory effort or survey of desirable territories

to be exploited for the expansion of the human race. Occupation of this continent for so many years asleep beneath ice and forest might be necessary, beneficial, in time, but he suspected that the Expansionists had the wrong approach to the problem, not so far removed from the predatory spirit of ancient conquest which had animated the first European discoverers of what was then the New World. They had gone thither to dig up gold and pick up pearls and diamonds and had remained to kill off the natives in one of the most brutal exterminations known in man's history—and then to fight among themselves for possession of treasures to be wrung from the earth by the work of slaves. If anything even faintly resembling that spirit of lust and rapine, of animal individualism, were to influence the present undertaking, the outcome would be disaster for the modern world. . . .

The guiding principle of the old man's long active life had been the search for a larger future for the human race,—true Expansion, based on careful studies of the misshapen, hazardous past. Thus the records of ancient civilizations so laboriously collected and studied under his direction existed primarily in his thought in order that mankind might draw from them useful information for guidance.

In the public lectures which from time to time he had delivered on the methods and purposes of the Great Expedition he had always stressed this point. The results of the expedition which would be carried by airwaves in picture and sound to every part of the globe and preserved for all time in many centers should establish the most favorable lines for human evolution. Everything in the past of humanity had been accidental, haphazard, a reckless dissipation of human energies. That past had been dependent upon unknown forces, giving rise to superstitions,—the idea of Fate! The present order was being conceived by the ablest minds with the fullest

knowledge, with definite purposes, using nature but not used by it. The future must reveal new avenues of expansion, new principles of enhancement of the values of life in endless variety. . . .

Across the old man's meditations floated the memory of Alisa's mutinous face, of Veronica's unsatisfied look when she defended woman's right to conceive whether or not it was for the best interest of society.

Could women ever be taught wholly to subordinate instinct to the common good? Would it forever haunt the best women—and men too—this desire for self-perpetuation, filling them with the dream of another felicity, another adventure? . . . Must this uncurbed instinct to reproduce one's kind once more endanger the happiness of mankind?

In the stern conditions out of which modern life had emerged the instinct of reproduction had been repressed by necessity. It was only in the last few centuries that the growing mastery of their environment and the accompanying ease of life in general had again revived the old problem of population and until now in no acute manner. Small new colonies had been set up in orderly fashion as opportunities were found, fostered and guided by the parent communities. Nothing since the Ice Age had been undertaken of the magnitude of this new venture in the lost continent. Would he live to regret his lifelong effort?

Sleep came at last to cut the coil of his meditations.

Chapter Two

THE LETHAL TEMPLE

AFTER a few hours of light slumber Felix stirred at the first touch of dawn. For a little while he lay on his couch watching the delicate coloration of the eastern sky, listening to the lively twittering of the birds already astir in the gardens below.

Then as the first songs of the labor gangs rose from a distance the old man went out on the terrace to watch the marching bands on their way to the day's tasks. Listening to their songs, a smile relaxing his firm lips, he recalled the sensations he had had as a boy at this hour in his distant island home, remembering some of his companions in his own labor band as one might old schoolmates, which in fact they were and more. Some were already dead, others had scattered to different parts of the world and rarely returned to their homes; some had accomplished distinguished services for their communities, some had lived modest lives in obscure posts: in the modern world none could merely vegetate like parasites, accomplishing nothing. Every human being had some function to perform, as long as he lived; the first effort was as a member of the local labor band, which was also school and apprenticeship.

On the fundamental axiom that every being born into the world must, within his or her physical powers and abilities, labor at some useful task carefully fitted to the strength and age and aptitude of the individual, the entire population was systematically organized into units of the labor army according

to age. Nobody could escape the labor obligation any more than in older European societies young men could escape conscription, except upon a certificate of his neighborhood clinic that the boy or girl was physically incapable of performing this duty—in which case the alternative of segregation and medical supervision was so distasteful that none would voluntarily choose it! As a fact the labor obligation was considered as natural as anything in life; the younger members regarded it as a prolonged camping expedition.

Felix remembered with keen delight that part of his life, the rising at dawn and bathing in the sea with members of his unit, breakfast in the open and the march to the assigned job, the jokes and the pranks that accompanied the work, the rest and recreation periods and the march home at night.

Much had been done in recent years to develop the social and educational aspects of the labor assignments, while its functional side, its relationship to industry and agriculture, was all the time being drawn closer with increasing subtlety so that there might be no waste of human effort. Obviously more and more of the heavier and coarser tasks were being performed by machines, especially since the control of magnetic force had been perfected. Labor was now for the most part the skillful use of mechanical instruments and hence educational. But there would remain always a certain modicum of purely physical labor which must be performed by the human hand. Such tasks were evenly distributed and carefully graded to age and aptitude so that the terrible exhaustion and brutalization of the laborer in less civilized epochs was avoided.

Labor was considered, inevitably, less from the tyrannical point of view of production (never of profit!) and more from the point of view of training and discipline. The labor assignments, which extended from twelve to forty years of the individual's life (unless there was reason for exemption), were

in their larger aspects the educational and preparatory years where individual aptitudes and interests and tastes were discovered and developed. At the conclusion of the labor period, during the last years of which the tasks had been increasingly specialized, the individual man or woman had been fitted for his life work whatever that might be and henceforth (except in case of emergency) was freed from all obligatory service in the labor bands.

Sport was not neglected during these work years, but sport being combined with definite tasks and with recreation and rest periods never became a thing apart like athletics and games pursued for their own ends, a career for a few specialists amusing idle onlookers. . . . The years between eighteen and thirty were spent in the more strenuous assignments, often in distant, undeveloped lands where under suitable leaders the ardent forces of youth were exerted in difficult and dangerous tasks, such as the reclamation of desert and jungle, on engineering and building projects, to prepare sites for new colonies of settlers, etc. It often happened that after the years passed on such distant projects young men and women, if they had been successful in winning their permits to have children, elected to make their permanent homes in one of the new colonies and there start family life.

Theoretically there was no more differentiation between the sexes in the labor obligation than in other aspects of social life. Girls were no longer condemned to the needle, the kitchen, the nursery (or to landscape gardening and interior decoration or other purely luxury work) unless they preferred such occupations and were really qualified to undertake them. Neither sex was considered fit or unfit merely because of sex for any form of work. Such distinction in fact had never prevailed in the lower, slave ranks of older civilizations, woman's exemption from the coarser forms of labor being an acquired means of

social distinction rather than a biologic necessity. Some women obviously had as robust physiques as any men and also the taste for physical labor, while some males had the delicate bodies and nervous organizations that fitted them for sedentary tasks. Yet the strong ambition of most women to bear children—not merely to enjoy sexual and emotional life which was open to anyone who could attract a mate, but to exercise their reproductive faculty, than which there was no higher and more exclusive honor in modern society—inevitably affected more or less their choice of occupations from their sixteenth year onwards.

The majority of “helpers,” i.e., laboratory assistants, clerks, nurses, cooks and such, were young women, while the majority of foremen, engineers, agricultural laborers, etc., were men rather than women, although there were many exceptions in both classes. But this differentiation of occupation was due less to the accident of sex (which was no longer pure accident, the sex of an infant being pretty nearly always predetermined by its parents) than to the inherited instinct of the individual. For complete functional interchangeability of the sexes more time must elapse, the functional distinction of the female having been so relentlessly ground into the human race for untold ages.

All arbitrary distinctions of sex in clothes, manners, habits, moral notions, had long since disappeared from human society, and their recurrence would be as much derided by the modern youth of both sexes as “Victorian” manners were once. (One of the popular subjects for comic sketches was the picture of an American or English woman of the old style in relation with a modern young man or vice versa and the consequent misunderstandings!) Because one human being happened to be born with male reproductive organs and another with those of the female was no more recognized as cause for differentia-

tion in daily life and conduct than if one happened to have a dark skin and the other white. In the warm climates where the earliest modern settlements flourished, such as Khartoum, the habit of naked public bathing had done much to cure that exaggerated and prurient sex curiosity that had so disgustingly characterized the social life of the later—so-called Christian—centuries of the old order. It was believed that the over-emphasis of the sexual aspect of life to the point of neurasthenia, one of the more decadent elements of every ancient civilization, had been due less to religious and economic influences than to the desire to increase sex lure. Also the preposterous cult of virginity no longer had any repute in the modern world: virginity in either sex after the eighteenth year was solely a question of personal choice, like preferences in food or occupation. Nobody of either sex pretended to a virginity no longer existing, because virginity in itself interested no one. . . .

Felix's meditations on these and kindred subjects were interrupted by Marco's anxiety to get his master off for the morning bath. The dog always slept by the old man's couch, as had his father and his grandfather in their time. Ever since he was a mere puppy uncertain in his rolling gait he had accompanied his master everywhere and was almost as widely known in Khartoum as Felix himself. . . .

Everybody had some sort of animal companion, bird or beast, ranging from parrots to monkeys and young antelopes or lynxes. Now that wild animals were no longer hunted they had become quite tame and familiar, coming into the city for food and drink. Felix preferred dogs because the dog from his long association with man had acquired sympathy and an understanding of human nature that made him especially companionable. Moreover, he considered that dogs had certain admirable traits of character which it would be well

for men to emulate, such as fidelity, devotion without expectation of rewards, readiness to subordinate themselves to their superiors. If one made an intimate friend of a good dog and observed his nature closely he could learn many useful lessons. The old man had got into the habit of talking aloud to Marco as to a trustworthy familiar. The hound would cock his head on one side and listen attentively to these discourses, respectfully refraining from interrupting or interjecting impatient comment as would almost any mere person. . . .

"I know, Marco, we are very late this morning. I got to thinking about those boys and girls in the labor gang that went by just now and that somehow led back to this perplexing problem of the birth rate, which I am afraid has popped up to plague my last days! It reminded me of those bad old times when human beings bred like animals—worse than any self-respecting dog because your females keep you somewhat in order and the human female encourages the male in his license. . . .

"The old unscientific idea was that something called natural selection and survival of the fittest weeded out the unfit, and it worked well enough while humanity was still savage, primitive. The strong and the tough survived and because they could survive they were the best for the sort of world they had to live in. But when men got intelligent enough to thwart those simple natural laws, to preserve the unfit and the less fit along with the fit there was a pretty mess. But they wouldn't do anything about it even when the superior members of society recognized clearly enough what was the matter—when the load of unfit had become a staggering burden for the rest to carry! They were afraid of old superstitions, which told them it was wrong to interfere with God's laws (even when they no longer believed that God made the laws!). They invented a lot of nonsense about a divine purpose working itself out

through the misery of millions of wretched human beings. . . . Even the best minds seemed uncertain what could be done to improve their own breed although they knew well enough how to make fat cattle and swift horses. So they just closed their eyes in blind faith in fate or nature or whatnot, which had this matter in charge, and somehow out of misery and squalor the human race would miraculously improve and they kept saying all the time that it was improving although they knew well enough that it wasn't, just becoming slyer and greedier.

"Well, Marco, our immediate ancestors got rid of all that nonsense. They had a hard time living through the frozen period. Not many babies were born—nor dogs—during those first years after the ice! There was not enough fertile land to supply food for many millions. And somehow humanity had undergone a change, perhaps a biologic change: they had fewer offspring even when the food began to be plentiful and there was no longer that reason for self-restraint. . . . It has only been for the last couple of centuries that we have had to take care there should not be more beings born than we could properly provide for. . . .

"The world moves fast these days, about twice as fast as before the Ice Age I calculate, and if we let 'em 'expand' as they call it we'll soon be back where the so-called Christian peoples were, in a mess, with a lot of low-grade helpless creatures dragging down the level of life to their own necessities. We can't have that, Marco! Never. Not if all the good-looking young women have to go without babies for a couple of generations! We'll ration 'em—or sterilize 'em! There's nothing automatic about it, as the old fellows believed—and nothing mysterious, just a sum in arithmetic. . . .

"Well, let's get out into the morning, Marco! There's a lot to be done today, boy. Veronica wants me to visit her college

and see the eastern beauties she has collected, and there's my lecture and the meeting of the Control . . . and that nice blue-eyed woman who wants her Permit—I must look into her case. . . . So come on!"

When Felix reached for his gown the hound put his front paws on his master's shoulders and gave him a little lick,—his way of acknowledging the old man's confidence, then bounded downstairs into the inner court where he gave a few short sharp barks to let the household know that its master had risen.

In the little inner court below the air was filled with a fresh morning odor, the richest and pleasantest perfume of the day, a mingling of dew and flower scents so that one could not tell whether it came from the yellow roses blooming in profusion along the wall or from the city laboratory. Varieties of flowers had been developed that bloomed every season of the year, and the laboratory perfume was designed to reënforce the natural odor of the season. But today there was a strong tang just beneath the heliotrope, the jasmin, and the rose perfume from the garden. "A dash of heather," Felix commented sniffing critically, "combined with something salt, what comes from salt marshes along the sea at high tide. An excellent combination!" It recalled to him the sea home of his youth. "A real artist, that fellow—I must remember to congratulate him on his mixtures."

(If such an appreciation, in terms of the connoisseur, of the humble sense of smell should appear effeminate, it must be remembered that in the modern world the faculty of smell so long acutely outraged in the ancient world had been highly cultivated: the skillful blender of fragrances considered himself no less an artist than his brother musician, who at certain hours of the day filled the air with agreeable sounds.)

Outside Felix's compound the streets were quite empty. The labor bands had already passed out of the city and most of the older inhabitants had gone to their various occupations. The irregular meandering ways that served for communication were interspersed with flower beds and broken by unexpected parks. The plan of the city would have been the despair of any landscape architect or old-fashioned "city planner," for instead of a checkerboard of intersecting streets or broad arteries for crowded motor traffic there was a bewildering maze of irregular design, each section being treated by itself, thus to give as much as possible the unpremeditated effect of country living. A square here, a small park there, a broad strip of greensward would be broken by color plantings changed at times. The landscape department was ever busy varying the general effects of the plantings, and as all arts were considered one, the bright plots of colored plants harmonized with the frescoed walls, the vine-covered roof lines, the rivulets of flowing water. To walk through a modern city like Khar-toum afforded a combination of agreeable surprises. . . .

As the sun's rays fell in bands of gold across his path Felix turned a corner and faced a small green park completely surrounded by tall cypresses. He paused at the entrance and glanced up the graveled path to a low white building over which an old jasmin vine grew in loose profusion, its delicate blossom-covered tendrils waving gently in the morning air.

This was the Lethal Temple for this quarter of the city, an essential and quite characteristic institution of the modern world. Here came those who for any reason wished to end their lives before the natural term, as well as those infrequent cases where society had determined to rid itself of some mistaken evil life.

Instead of heaping every contumely and denunciation upon those who through sickness or emotional distress or inner con-

viction happened to become weary of living their lives, modern society provided them with a suitable opportunity for a decent and painless fulfillment of their desires. No especial effort was made to dissuade them from their intention, a decent reticence being the rule in this as in all purely personal affairs. Nevertheless, an elderly physician and a matron were always in attendance at the Temple to examine the candidates for suicide, and during the required three days of waiting discussed the question with them. If the sufferer seemed distraught or moved by an ephemeral emotion such as disappointment in love, the attendant physician had the right to require a longer delay or to refuse the use of the lethal chamber altogether. Suicide was considered a privilege that only those in their right minds should enjoy. If the person seemed normal and assured of his intention, no further restraint was attempted and after the doctor's examination the chamber was prepared, with the form of gas that was deemed most effective for the case. The candidate withdrew into a pleasant cheerful chamber, which was sealed for the necessary time, and his nearest friends—if they had not accompanied him as was often the case—were summoned to remove the body to the city crematorium. . . .

Felix stopped before the portico of the Temple to admire the luxuriant jasmin vine which he himself had planted there many years before. The sun was just touching its dew-covered blossoms accentuating the gentle peace of the place, which the old man frequently visited. There had been a time long ago when he himself had entered the Temple with the firm intention of ending his life. It was after the death of the being most tenderly loved in all his long life. He was then very nearly forty, and they had been close companions for years. One of those maladies that still occasionally baffled modern medicine had attacked this loved woman in the full bloom of her beauty and power; the previous day Felix had accompanied

her to the lethal chamber so that her intolerable suffering might be ended. He had left her alone in the death chamber. The memory of her last glance as he rose from her side to leave the room would haunt him always, it seemed. He felt that it would be impossible for him to live without her loveliness, her staunch spirit of comradeship, her near and dear presence, and so the day after her death he had come back to the Temple, not in search of her whom he had lost—for all the arguments and the speculations of all the ages had never convinced him of personal immortality—but to end an intolerable loneliness.

But the physician then in residence at the Temple, an old friend, after leaving him alone with his brooding thoughts for a time had undertaken to dissuade him from his purpose, stressing considerations that because of his emotional condition had become obscured—his unfinished labors—he was already reckoned among the most influential members of the community, the last wishes of his beloved companion confided to the physician, and then touched his imagination—always his most active faculty—about the possibilities of further living. As a result Felix had agreed to defer the final decision for a time, staying on at the Temple where he seemed nearer the memory of the dead woman, until the first sharp sense of utter bereavement might at least become dulled.

He recalled the trivial accident that had finally turned his purpose. Sitting desolate one morning in the garden of the temple inclosure, which at that time seemed to him neglected, needlessly forlorn, he asked himself, why should the last habitation be so uninviting, so repellent? Impulsively as was his habit to match perception with deed he determined to rectify that neglect so that the next comer might not be annoyed as he had been. Hurrying back to his home he summoned a gardener, and collected flowers and other materials with which

to adorn the last resting place of those about to withdraw from life.

On entering the outer court of his home his dog—the great-grandfather of Marco!—ran to greet him whimpering with delight at recovering his lost master. He must take the little beast in his arms to appease his emotion, which distracted the man somewhat from the acute sense of loss that here in their common home might have reawakened his desire to die. The quivering animal nestled in his arms and moaned with satisfaction at having found his master once more. The small beast's sense of abandonment and his vivid joy in recovering his human friend moved the sorrowing man strangely. "To something I am still of supreme value," he thought ironically and took the little dog back with him to the Temple so that he might spend these last hours with his master and perhaps accompany him into the lethal chamber.

On his return, however, Felix became so preoccupied with the task of embellishing the place that for several days he thought little of entering the death chamber. Then one night came one of those rare sand storms called from ancient times a "hubbub," then common enough in this region at certain seasons of the year, but of late largely controlled by the extensive forestation that had reclaimed many parts of the surrounding desert.

The eastern desert across the Blue Nile had not yet been planted and occasionally from this old waste of white sand came the whirling winds that carried the sand cloud over a mile from the earth. The sand having mounted far into the heavens like a huge waterspout came sifting back to earth so thickly that one could see but a few feet in any direction. The dwellers in Khartoum perforce remained within doors for the duration of the "hubbub," stifled in their rooms into which in spite of all precautions the sand penetrated, very much as

centuries before the Arabs had sat huddled in mud huts or tents until the evil thing had exhausted its fury. The sand storm covered the city with a gray coat to the depth of several inches, burying and largely destroying all the efforts Felix had just put forth to beautify the temple grounds.

As he busied himself after the storm in uncovering the garden and observed the labor division at the work of salvage outside the temple grounds he thought how supine it was of men to suffer these periodic irruptions of nature, which fortunately they had now sufficient knowledge to prevent. Why should modern men permit their lives to be the sport of such wild forces as their remote ancestors had perforce suffered passively in all parts of the world? Flood, fire, and drought, hurricanes and sand storms, these were natural antagonists of man that must be subdued. Then and there came to him the magnificent design of covering the eastern desert lands with thick forests.

This idea sent the man forth from the Lethal Temple the next morning, never to return thither for the accomplishment of his original purpose, although he often sought its peaceful seclusion for contemplation and rest. One thing had led to another in a busy, energized life, while the acute sorrow that had nearly driven him to his death softened to a gentle inner melancholy. Other women had entered his life from time to time, each with her own gift of beauty and affection, none to oust completely the image of the supremely beloved, held always in his imagination. He learned—a great secret of loving—not to compare nor to regret. Thus he had achieved enough happiness, even at rare times pure joy, in the intervals of his active life. . . .

Now while he sat in the same forecourt under the jasmin vine which he had planted, watching the bees at their perpetual task of extracting honey from the blossoms, he recalled

all this and much else and musingly thought how much he would have lost had it not been for the wise words of the old physician, also for the ardent affection of one small dog (long since dead of old age) whose little stabbing tongue had aroused his pity. . . .

But now, he reflected, the time was drawing near when he might wisely carry out what in his too hasty youth he had wanted to do. Soon feebleness and the disabilities of age would have him in their inexorable clutch. He would become a care, a burden for others, which was intolerable. Moreover he might lose what was more important than physical strength, suppleness of mind and quick sympathy. While he was arguing with the youth yesterday he had felt something rigid and hard forming within him, something dead. Convictions were no longer nourished with understanding of others, which the aged are apt to consider wisdom! One of the purposes of establishing these lethal chambers was to permit the old to relinquish life in decency with all their faculties alert, so that they might not be doomed to unlovely decay and dissolution, still living, as in the old days.

Just here there entered at the temple gate an old man, one of his acquaintances for many years. Bent with withered face (albeit not toothless, which was no longer necessary thanks to modern skill in diet and hygiene) the old man dragged himself slowly up the flower-bordered path towards the temple entrance, gazing wistfully around him, as if he were appraising his last abode.

"Looking for a place to rest awhile, Claude?" Felix called to him.

"Aye! For always."

The two old men exchanged a glance of common understanding.

"And you also?"

"Some of these days I suppose," Felix admitted, then quickly, "but not just yet! . . . I still have a few things to do before I could leave contentedly. I want to make the expedition to the western continent and poke about in what remains of that famous American civilization. You know of the plan to uncover some of their old cities, don't you?"

The old man nodded wearily.

"Yes, yes, everyone is talking about the wonders to be discovered when they get New York and Detroit and all these other cities dug up. But I see no use in it. Why not let them rot in their hives of steel and concrete the same as they lived? From all one reads about them you will find little enough we should care to have."

Felix laughed gayly.

"Well, that's one good reason for excavating their cities—to realize how much better off we are as we have made ourselves. Though, they thought pretty well of themselves! Those Americans were the most conceited, boasting people that ever existed on this planet, forever swelling and bragging about their accomplishments,—until the year 1929 A.D. One doesn't find much complacency in their books after that date."

"So you are going to all that trouble just to find out what not to do? I see no good in that," and old Claude shook his head in melancholy. "Each age to its own troubles and its own triumphs—and its own illusions. We have our own all right!"

"What do you consider our chief trouble?" Felix demanded briskly.

"Oh, this idea that life can be anything much in itself, no matter what improvements we may make in it."

"My dear Claude, you must have a bad doctor! What makes you get that way so early of a fine morning?"

"Thinking of the many things that have happened to me in my eighty years of life, of many things that I have seen

happen to others. . . . It has not all been cakes and ale, as they used to say, by any means."

Felix recalling certain incidents in the other man's life replied in a gentler tone.

"It is impossible to eliminate all risk and grief from living. As long as one accepts human life there must be those!"

The old man gazed glumly at the silent Temple.

"Well, one does not have to accept life as you say if one no longer desires its risks and griefs!"

"That is true." . . .

"Tell me," Claude began again after a short pause. "Do they plan to open up that great waste continent to occupation?"

"Perhaps—ultimately. . . . It will take time, although our engineers think they have discovered a way to turn warm equatorial currents up close to the eastern shore, which should hasten matters, and establish a better climate than that part of the continent enjoyed before the ice settled over it."

"Why so much hurry about heating it up?"

"To make more habitable land for new colonies, of course. Population is rising all over the globe as you know, and although we have enough unoccupied land for the present in Asia and Africa, Europe promises to be slow in coming into use. . . . The New World, as it once was called, will be a splendid reserve for the future, once it has been brought back into condition."

Felix was surprised to hear his own confident manner of treating the question, which was not unlike Paul's point of view. Something in the dreary old man had aroused a latent sympathy with Expansion.

"Oh, aye, aye," old Claude scoffed. "Everyone is babbling about the wonderful things that will be done with this New World once we get our hands on it. After that has been brought back into civilization I suppose you will be turning

your minds to the stars and seeing what you can do up there to make 'em tidy places for humanity to exploit?"

"Perhaps!"

"What for? Why fill up the universe with so many human beings?" grumbled the old man. "Haven't I heard you yourself, Felix, tell how this earth of ours before the last Ice Age was overcrowded with inferior lives, always growing poorer the faster they bred, so that not even wars and disease and want could keep the population at a reasonable point?"

"True! But think how different the quality was then, as the result of indiscriminate breeding. . . . It is quality that counts, not numbers, but I do not believe there is much likelihood of humanity degenerating, going back to the old loose way of indiscriminate breeding. . . . So long as we can improve the quality of human lives there is no danger. Think what has been accomplished in a short thousand years! How evenly distributed and well nourished and comfortably settled humanity is today, without fratricidal strifes, without constant fear, the sense of insecurity, the few living off the labor of the many, without degradation, defeat, and disease for any considerable numbers. . . . We have gone a long way towards their old heaven!"

"Yes, yes, I know all that," old Claude interrupted peevishly. "How can anybody escape knowing your improvement statistics! They are dinned into our ears at every corner, even the birds of the forests are taught to sing them. . . . But what of it? At your very best life is no such great thing. Why add more billions to the population just because you can squeeze 'em in somewhere and feed 'em all and give them plenty of recreation and baths and free music? . . . I must say all that line of argument smacks too much of the crude ancient idea of the virtue of fecundity, the same sort of delusion of grandeur the German tribes were possessed with every now and then

to the discomfiture of their neighbors. The Japs too—the same way. I have often heard you ridicule their claim to rule just because they produced more babies than any other people. . . . If we go on stuffing the earth and the neighboring planets with all the human lives they will hold, we will bring back inevitably stupid wars, greed, fighting for one's sacred ego and all the rest of the old rot which we pride ourselves on being rid of for good and all. . . . No, I see nothing but danger for mankind in your great enterprise. . . . Stay at home and cultivate your garden—or die as I mean to!"

Felix's fine face became somber.

"There *is* risk," he admitted, "there is always the risk of reverting. Our modern mentality which we rightly consider so superior to anything but rare isolated cases in the old world might degenerate as quickly as it developed, given the wrong conditions. If future generations *will* to revert to the old order there is nothing to prevent them even if we stayed right here in Khartoum and never ventured forth! That as you know happened often enough in the few thousand years before the last Ice Age. There were promising starts, like the Egyptian, the Greek, yes, the Russian at the end, but after a few centuries they relapsed. Nobody can say positively that modern humanity if given the wrong impulse will not do the same. . . . One has to take one's stand, either faith in the future with risk or—as you are thinking of doing, give up consciousness as a bad job. I, my friend, prefer the other horn of the dilemma!"

Having reached the inevitable crossroads the two old men were silent for a long time. Gradually a smile came over Felix's sensitive lips, and he began once more,—

"What we are discussing reminds me of an extraordinary statement I ran across in an old English book I have been reading. The writer related with pride an anecdote of one of

the great American financiers, I think his name was Rockchild—no, that was not just it; however, no matter . . . a university president, one of the social leaches of the day, was trying to extract from this Cræsus one of those large donations which at that period the excessively rich were in the habit of bestowing on educational institutions, partly for *réclame*—it was one of the easiest ways of getting oneself favorably known—and partly as a sort of social insurance, so that the ambitious youth of the day might be trained in conservative notions about private property. . . . This university president, it seems, was a very young man, arrogant and self-confident; he made the usual pleas on behalf of his institution, its growing size, numbers of students and all that. When he paused, Cræsus—Morganbild or Rockmel, I can never remember their names—was silent, considering as the young university president fondly hoped the exact number of millions that he would hand over to him. When he opened his lips after a while, so the story runs, he remarked gravely like an old sage,—‘Young man, if you can answer satisfactorily a single question I shall put to you, I will give you a larger sum of money than anybody has yet given to any college in the history of the world.’ You can imagine how excited the young university president was! He simpered prettily as he replied,—‘Although I cannot pretend to be as wise as you, I should like to try my hand at being the Sphynx.’ The old capitalist let his question slide over his thin lips,—‘What, young man, can take the place of Necessity in the world?’ The story goes on to relate how the youthful Diogenes was dumbfounded by such profound wisdom and sorrowfully took his departure from the great man’s library, considering himself fortunate to be carrying with him a check for a paltry few hundred thousands of dollars instead of the expected millions.”

Felix laughed at his own tale, but Claude puckered his face and remarked,—

“Well? What has taken the place of necessity in our world?”

His companion became instantly grave once more.

“Delight in activity; desire; joy,—a thousand different motives! . . . The rich man’s question seems to me to have embodied the entire forlorn mistake of the old world! The fundamental postulate of Master to Slave—is just necessity. Such a conception was born of slave mentality, or as no doubt the old capitalist sincerely believed in the fact that human nature being so, that is nine-tenths slave, would operate only under compulsion. Which no doubt was true in the world such as he and his kind had made and throve in! . . . Yet the old fellow was reputed to be extremely philanthropic, and I have no doubt that from his narrow assumptions he was generous, quite willing to help the poor and needy, although if I am not mistaken he was one of those great owners of an industry which ground its workers often to the very edge of existence, which extracted their labor through pressure of want skillfully applied combined with satisfying cheap desires, then administered a form of social paregoric in the shape of medical institutions and amusement centers, like the bread and circuses of the old Romans, who were also believers in Necessity and Slave Mentality for the masses. . . . He was a great patron of religion too, a very important person in those last decades of the Christian era, this Jacob Rockstein—I never could remember their names, so meaningless they were.”

“What was the matter with him? I read his life once, and he seems to have been a very well-meaning fellow. In those simple times the strong individual had to manage affairs: they did not have such wonderful Planning Boards and Supreme Councils and Managing Directors of the Universe who do the job for nothing as we have.”

Felix ignoring the jibe continued,—

“Those benevolent capitalists as they used to call them must have got a considerable kick out of imitating God. They felt, no doubt sincerely, that the world could not go on without them—there were plenty of parasites in every class to tell them so! In time they ran it into chaos. You remember what happened between the Great War as they called it and the Ice Age? Their belief that they were necessary to the harmonious functioning of this world was badly damaged in those years. . . . I wonder how this Ratkild and Morkahn and Yellon and all the rest of the tribe felt when their toy no longer ran! . . . No, my friend, that Sphynx riddle of the rich man was merely the flower of the master-slave mentality, which it has been our one great triumph to have largely eradicated from the consciousness of humanity. It has taken a good thousand years, but we have almost succeeded,—even if there are a few doleful skeptics like yourself. Man no longer recognizes Necessity as the one supreme law of his existence. Just in that as much as in anything he differentiates himself and all his conduct from the miserable inhabitants of the earth before the last Ice Age . . . neither necessity due to Nature nor necessity due to his own nature. Mankind is at last broadly speaking a free agent, for the first time in the thirty or forty thousand years of his conscious existence on this earth.”

“And how about this little rest house?” old Claude asked ironically, indicating the dark interior of the old Lethal Temple. “Does this not seem to indicate the survival of one great Necessity?”

“You mean that men are still born of women and must die some time when their course is run? I grant you that much of necessity in our universe although we have saved uncounted millions of wretched creatures from being born at all to be a burden to themselves and others! Birth itself is no longer

compulsory, but a rare privilege! . . . And from the hour when the human child is taken from its mother's body and first sees the light, it is cared for, nourished and protected and equipped for its life as never hitherto was attempted. And increasingly it is left free to choose its individual destiny, guided merely by the choices made for it by its forebears and by the social control to which life must submit in order to endure. It need never know fear or starvation. Many hundreds of years ago we gave up compulsory labor as needless and degrading, substituting an organization of all youth into graded labor units. . . . If mankind is not wholly freed from necessity, men and women are as free as they can be and exist!"

Claude's expression evinced an increasing distaste for the doctrine, but he said nothing.

"For Necessity as the mainspring of human activity we have substituted an instinctive desire for life. Living has become so desirable, so interesting, so provocative to the higher curiosities, so stimulating to the creative spirit in men that as you know few among us ever seek the forlorn refuge of this Temple. Our modern world beats ever with a more powerful rhythm of passionate absorption in life, which flows from a veritable ecstasy of spirit. I see it every waking hour of my life, among the work units or in the laboratory, where are being formed the plans for our great Exploratory Expedition to the old New World. I myself feel this ecstatic flood of eager interest running through my old veins so fast that it threatens to suffocate me. At my ninety-odd years I find myself saying over and over,—'If I may only live to carry out this last discovery, to set the lines for a new and fairer use of this forgotten continent than what was made of it three thousand years ago!'"

Felix paused in his chant to catch his breath and rising strode lightly up and down the forecourt.

"Very brave, very eloquent at least," his companion murmured maliciously. "I wish I might feel as enthusiastic as you do about it all. But to me life is essentially evil, always was and always will be, although I admit that just now and here for some unknown reason there happens to be a temporary lull in its brutalities. . . . I belong"—he hesitated and then flung out defiantly—"to the Old Believers who know that this world of ours, the universe itself, has been engendered in the imagination of some evil prepotent Force, working his willful design, which we shall never comprehend in its entirety. . . . Human life that you so vaunt can be nothing more than an uneasy dream, as deep-thinking men have recognized always."

The two old men looked at each other defiantly.

"So," said Felix gently, sighing, "you are one of them! I knew that a few like you existed here and there holding such dreary doctrines as you have voiced. But I thought they were confined to the remoter corners of the earth where old religious superstitions hang on like smoke in deep caverns. Superstitions always linger on into the new life! The Christian religion itself with its preposterous demands upon credulity was potent for centuries after humanity had rejected its major tenets: men and women were still found paying it lip service, for social reasons or fear lest it might be true. . . . So your philosophy of despair, reasonable enough perhaps in a world where violence and wrong were universal, where existence was a bad gamble and generally miserable, still persists in a world that gives the lie to it every waking moment. How can you, my old friend, believe that this beautiful morning world we are allowed to enjoy is evil wrought of evil destined to an evil end?"

"Not everybody, Felix, is endowed with your happy illusion-

creating disposition, even in New Khartoum," the old man observed dryly and added meaningly, "nor everyone has been so fortunate as you in love and ambition!"

Felix wheeled sharply and gazed scornfully at his companion.

"You believe that? . . . So the worm of envy and of jealousy still eats at the human heart!"

"Why not? After all you do not think that you have completely changed the nature of human beings?"

"Yes, by all the gods in every heaven that has ever been dreamed of, that is just what we have done, changed what is known as human nature; that is we have suppressed certain characteristics that were once considered basic, like greed and violence, and in their place planted not new impulses but enhanced old ones, so that the modern being of all ages and conditions reacts differently to any given situation from the way his ancestors would have reacted, arboreal or so-called Christian!"

"You talk as if we had become gods," sneered the old man.

"No, not yet—but we are on the way to become gods in time if you mean beings of a calm, harmonious nature without evil predispositions, whose intelligence has risen to a far higher level than that of any previous human race. Yes, we shall be gods in due time, and even today we are far more godlike than our ancestors ever dreamed of becoming!"

"Unless we revert . . . as always in the past men reverted to the primitive instincts deep down within."

"Why should we revert until another Ice Age advances—perhaps not even then, because we shall have so far gained control of nature that we may know what to do to save the race, even then. . . . However, that may well not occur for another million years or so and much can happen on this

earth before that far-off day. . . . I must be going to perform some of the things I have been chattering to you about."

"Go on then, happy optimist! You haven't persuaded me that life is worth the living."

"No? There are not many who feel as you do, not many nowadays who come here to end a bad job. Scarce a score, the doctor tells me, in the past five years of his service here, and of these fourteen were sent by their physicians for relief from incurable diseases and two of the others were misbegotten children. There must be a good many of your fellows who find life today not merely tolerable, but predominantly good instead of evil. . . . Look out there!"

As if to point his argument some passing children had stopped to glance within, grew silent for a moment, then began to play among the flower beds. . . . Felix gathering up his loose robe called out,—

"Wait for me, boys—I'll go along with you to the Lake!" Then tossed over his shoulder to the doleful old man crouching on the marble bench before the door of the Temple,—

"Better put an end to it, this evil life!" He made a gesture towards the open door of the Lethal Temple. "It was made for just your trouble, to answer the great riddle. Bon voyage!" Then after a pause,— "Did I believe in compulsion of any kind I'd have a questionnaire sent to everybody in Khartoum, a referendum vote (such as they used to take on having drink in America) on 'Is life worth living?' and to those who voted 'No' I'd order them one and all to the nearest lethal chamber. . . . By-by, old friend, and don't wait long. I shall follow you at the last possible moment, but not until I have had a hand in starting that old New World moving again on the newest of all designs where untold millions of happy new lives may be created and lived out. When you find that hoary old genius of Evil whom you pretend to worship, give him my

compliments and tell him that we have reduced his followers in this world to a negligible handful like yourself of disappointed or reverting men and women, along with the followers of the God of Vengeance, the God of Mercy, and all the other compensation and makeshift gods of the old primitive humanity. We have relegated them all to the museums, as examples to our young of the fears and superstitions of that elder world from which they have fortunately escaped. Evil! . . . Life is so good at ninety that I begrudge each minute spent in sleep—or in foolish chatter like this.”

His high musical voice faded away outside the walls of the temple enclosure, mingled with the tinkling laughter of his young companions, who without understanding very well what the old men had been discussing felt sure that old Felix (who was much loved) must be right.

Chapter Three

YOUTH

SURROUNDED by this gay group of girls and boys the old man felt sure that he had been wasting good time in the melancholy company of the senile Claude and even in indulging sentimentally his own sad memories of the Lethal Temple. He went along with his young companions much more on a footing of equality than would have been possible in any older form of society. Thanks to a constantly improving hygiene, mental and physical, and to the universal absence of worry over the means of subsistence, age limitations and prejudices once so destructive to sympathy between different generations had largely vanished. Young and old of both sexes mingled everywhere at all times on an equal footing: all spirit was not supposed to be confined to the one or all wisdom to the other!

The average life of the human being had been extended fully twenty years, but whereas formerly the effort had been merely to add to the average expectation of life, now the goal was to eliminate those distressing deteriorations of human tissue that once made the last twenty years of the human being an existence rather than life. Instead of considering a human being fit only for the scrap heap at forty-five or fifty, which had been the ruthless verdict during the last hectic decades of the old world, it was now believed that a man or a woman was at that age just entering upon life's most fruitful and enjoyable phase when the results of preparatory efforts might be reaped.

Education instead of being crowded as a special discipline into a dozen or eighteen of the most immature years had been merged with the entire span of the individual's activities. Beginning literally in the cradle with the definite culture of the unconscious education persisted through manifold forms until the grave.

In fact education—a term so little understood, so much abused in the old world—was no longer talked about as something apart from other activities, to be wrangled over or theorized about or paraded as an accomplishment. That would be as foolish as talking about living apart from individual life! There were no more professional “educators,” no more wordy battles between advocates of the “theoretic” and the “practical.” All that sort of thing was considered as so much dust of old schoolmen.

No doubt this new conception of education, eliminating altogether those years of formal drill, usually dreary and irksome to youth or mere wasted time, the complete abolition of school as such, of college as a special sort of playground for privileged youth, had done much to break down artificial barriers between young and old, merging both in the one universal relationship of members of the same society. That form of education was held to be the most efficacious which was least conscious, acquired through the senses and the intelligence of the active human being, not abstractly through formulas. And as imitation must always remain the primary educational method, the free association and intercourse of all ages and conditions of individuals were essential. So instead of being turned over to governesses, tutors, and hired teachers, all specialists and socially limited persons, as in the old days, modern children and youth lived with their elders, played and argued with them, imitated them.

Thus from early infancy the young, like domestic animals,

acquired unconsciously the communal habits of their tribe, as had been the custom of primitive peoples, who had thus preserved intact their social organism, their tradition and religion through untold generations. The individual thus integrated into his human environment from the dawn of consciousness became inseparable from it, was moved by its impulses, governed by its acquired wisdom and ideals—instead of “playing a lone game,” “fighting for himself,” “developing his individuality,” etc., etc.—in other words, trying to impose a willful egotism upon others and glorifying his own wayward desires.

In these ways human society had evolved gradually into what to the old world mind would have appeared an impossible paradox,—anarchy within strict control! In government modern societies more nearly resembled what was once abhorred as pure Anarchy than anything else, its separate units or enclaves being autonomous and self-governing, the apparatus of government everywhere being reduced to the minimum (and it was extraordinary how little of the old government machinery was needed, violence and personal greed having been definitely eliminated!) instead of growing like a cancer until in the end it had throttled society itself. Within this free fluid frame of the modern world the individual was held in the firm grasp of tradition and social consciousness, which however greatly it might change content never relaxed its insistence. *Don'ts* had been supplanted by *do's* without the individual being aware of what guided him or ever questioning its validity.

Prestige alone gave power in modern society, and prestige was purely personal, due neither to material advantages nor to the control of votes,—an intangible subtle quality, the supreme expression of personal character. Thus the old Greek, Felix, was one of the best known and most influential persons in Africa (or indeed in the entire civilized world) and young

men and women, even the small children pressing around him on their way to the Lake this morning, were quite well aware of his importance, his distinction, but not in the least abashed by it, or made hypocritical by his presence among them. Nor was Felix himself conscious of his elevated position in the estimation of his contemporaries any more than he was conscious of the shape of his head or the size of his mouth.

The project for the exploration of the forgotten continent of North America was associated with him because for so many years he had actively interested himself in it and furthered its accomplishment. The plan was known everywhere and discussed with the liveliest interest and acute criticism. The long labors of preparation, technical and ethnological, were now almost completed; recently advance units of engineers and technicians had been despatched to the northern seaboard of America where it had been determined to make the first researches; Felix had announced his intention of visiting the scene of operations soon. . . .

Information about essential matters such as this Expedition was widely disseminated in the modern world, which had perfected numerous ways of transmitting knowledge instantaneously so that it became part of the general consciousness of humanity, whether or not the individual was concerned immediately in the project. On the other hand, much that was considered news in the old world societies and thrust upon everybody's attention whether desired or not was ignored,—the sexual relationships of persons, their private quarrels, disgraces, misfortunes, political and social rivalries, which made up nine tenths of old world "news." Even offenses against accepted conventions and habits of society were ignored as bad smells inadvertently emitted in a polite gathering would be ignored.

It was, of course, no longer thought either feasible or de-

sirable to keep "the Public," that is, people in general, in the dark about important matters of policy affecting the whole social body, there being no longer the interests of selfish rival communities or of selfish and self-seeking individuals to consider. Whatever "diplomacy" remained in the social relations of different groups was open to the four winds of heaven: it was not considered an occult mystery whose effective workings must be hidden under subterfuges and mystifications of meaningless jargon. . . .

So when one of the youngsters asked the old man,—

"When are you going to America?" he could easily toss back,—“When everything is ready.”

"Next month?"

"Or the month after . . . a few months will make no difference. The greater part of the continent has been under ice for centuries, only now becoming fit for human life. . . . Even Columbus, you remember, had a long time to wait before he could set sail on his first voyage."

"Columbus didn't know where he was going—you do!"

"We don't know what our discoveries will lead to, any more than Columbus did!"

"I have seen the model of old New York in the museum," one youngster announced eagerly. "Will it look anything like that now?"

His companions laughed at his simplicity.

"Not much," Felix replied. "Just great mounds like the ones in our central park where Old Khartoum was, only bigger mounds I expect."

"What's inside of them?" the youngster persisted.

"That's what we intend to find out," Felix answered gently. "Rubbish I suppose,—steel and iron, concrete, bricks, perhaps human bones, and the machines they used. We hope to discover how much like us those people were and just how they

lived in those days. We know from the written records they left that there were a great many of them and that they were very proud of their engines and of their high buildings, much larger and taller buildings than any on the earth today. You must have seen pictures of them and of the people who lived in them?"

"Oh, yes," the boy admitted, "but they aren't the real thing."

"Maybe when you are older you can go over there and see for yourself what it is like. The exploration of that great land will not be completed in your lifetime." . . .

A pretty dark-skinned girl exclaimed,—

"It must be wonderful, a great empty country like that and a dead city! How I'd like to be going there! . . . I suppose I shall never see all those places we have heard so much about."

Felix smiled at the girl's eagerness and disappointment thus frankly expressed. She was eighteen, gloriously made and beautiful, perfect in the promise of physical life, and she wore the coveted gold thread edging her upper garment, which indicated—as every child knew—that she had been approved as a potential mother, had received her Permit, as it was called. She need not have children, if for personal reasons she preferred the childless life, that of her less fortunate companions. But if as was likely she should desire to bear children, she was of that carefully chosen and strictly disciplined minority of her sex who between the ages of eighteen and forty-two might beget children with a suitable mate who had also received his Permit. She was free to select this father of her children from among the body of youths who had passed the test of parenthood, but her choice must be approved before the union could take place. Otherwise, if she broke the rigid custom that controlled reproduction of the human race, she might suffer the disgrace and the sorrow of having her stillborn child taken from her and herself be sterilized as a prevention of further

misbehavior, like any ordinary woman who had failed to obtain a Permit or who wished to live a free life or who had been promiscuous before mating.

Modern society for its own protection and improvement had gradually evolved these restrictions upon child-bearing and imposed them on everyone without favor. Outside of the limited number privileged to continue the race, men and women, once painlessly sterilized by the application of rays that in no way affected either bodily or mental character except the function of reproduction, were free to live as they liked. Once sterilized the individual's sex life was purely and entirely a private matter, of no social concern—and what is more noteworthy—not the subject of comment or criticism from others. . . .

“If you are so keen, my dear, to see strange lands and lead a life of adventure, you are free to choose that way,” Felix remarked gently. “There is nothing to prevent you—but you will have to give up wearing that pretty dress, which so becomes you!”

The girl fell back into the laughing group of her companions. They all knew that a young man who expected daily to obtain his fatherhood Permit had persuaded her to join him in the application for the certificate of parenthood which there was no doubt would be granted them. Thereafter for twenty years or more their lives would necessarily be fixed, both their lives, and all adventurous wanderings precluded.

There were no fixed hours for work or recreation in this modern world, no punching of time clocks and watching of dials! Those engaged on special tasks that required concentration stayed with them long after ordinary working hours. Likewise everybody ate when and where it was most convenient; the food booths for the distribution of essential meals

could be found almost anywhere, and the quality of the foods prepared was of a uniform excellence as well as in generous variety. The preparation and distribution of food being under the control of the powerful department of public hygiene received the most careful attention. The doctrine that man is what he eats was taken seriously: no universal indigestions as among the ancient Americans were permitted to irritate the tranquil spirits of the people! No unhealthy superfluity nor degrading hunger distracted the modern man and woman. . . .

So when at last Felix arrived with his young companions beside the Blue Lake there were a few late comers like himself on the broad beach while others were breakfasting in one of the pavilions scattered through the neighboring grove. The lovely dark-skinned girl and her fair-haired blue-eyed lover had already dropped their simple garments at the water's edge and hand in hand were stepping into the clear water, instead of squirming on their bellies in the hot sand, indulging in a prolonged sexual irritation. The girl's bronze flesh glistened as the spray touched her. She was from the ancient people of Abyssinia, one of the purest of old world stocks, while her young lover came from a well-known Khartoum family that had descended from one of the last English governors of the Sudan, who had had children by an Arab woman. Ever so often according to the inescapable law of heredity the light hair and blue eyes and pale skin of this remote northern progenitor turned up in an almost pure form as in this young man. The couple thus brilliantly contrasted in coloring and type offered an admirable picture of modern youth.

After playing for a time with some companions the couple swam off towards one of the wooded islands where they might take their breakfast. Such intimacy as this, however, would "mean nothing" in the evasive terminology of a more licentious

age. The blond lover of the dark Abyssinian girl would never think of transgressing the strict tabu that separated lovers sexually until they were ready to be mated, any more than he would indulge in amorous license with his mother or sister.

Of course this strict tabu had been broken—incest was not unknown in Christian societies—but instances of such transgression were so rare and so abhorred that the mere idea of it never entered the consciousness of a young lover or of a girl, unmated and unsterilized, who wore the white chiton with the gold thread. It was as if both were hypnotically inhibited, parted for the time from each other's body and from all sexual play, as is the habit of many females among the animals. With the tabu thus firmly operative youth was as unconscious of sex as birds in flight.

What was deemed modesty in the modern world was something quite different from anything so considered by older civilized peoples, although a like understanding might have been found in more primitive societies whose ideas of procreation and sexual relationships had not yet been perverted by contact with so-called Christian ideals! Modesty was complete unconsciousness of the body, the only form of modesty with any intrinsic value. The naked brown girl playing in the water with her fair-skinned lover, floating on her back, her firm breasts upturned to his gaze, was as unconscious of herself as the new-born child or as the ripe woman passionately absorbed in the embrace of her mate. This altogether desirable simplicity about sexual functions—and the lack of gossip upon such matters, of sex pruriency in general—was in large part due, no doubt, to the custom of sterilization of all males and females other than the select few chosen to carry on the race. After sterilization had taken place (that is, usually after the eighteenth year), which was necessary for the protection and

the improvement of the race, it was obviously no one's business what the individual, male or female, did about his sex life, any more than with his other appetites, unless they manifested themselves in socially objectionable ways.

Inevitably there had evolved refinements, æsthetic and individual variations in sex habits as in all other matters. There was much the same wide variety in the sex habits of the human race that there had always been since consciousness had first modified primitive impulse: there were promiscuous and monogamic types of sexual union, the casual lovers as well as the romantic and idealizing kind. But as there was no longer any reason for curiosity about the sex life of another, everyone male or female being unhindered in satisfying the sex impulse as he or she might desire, this variety of sexual habits had no evil effects upon society in general. One potent cause why the modern individual could accomplish as much as he did so easily—one basis for the high level of health of body and mind—was that humanity was no longer teased and tortured by sex obsessions and repressions as had been the case with ninety percent of the human race between the years of sixteen and sixty in the older types of civilization. (And as the "struggle for life" had intensified in those older civilizations the distortions due to sex aberrations had alarmingly increased.) Now men and women were free to concentrate their energies on more essential matters than their couplings!

Even more remarkable to the ancient type of mind would be the almost total absence of sex jealousies in modern life, and of all so-called passional crimes. To account for such an amelioration in human conduct is difficult because the cause of these distressing abnormalities was more obscure than anything else in the psychology of the old world.

One obvious reason for the change was emancipation from the "possession" obsession. Men and women no longer strove

to own each other any more than they did physical property. A romantic comedy such as Shakspeare's *Winter's Tale* (and most of the romantic literature of the nineteenth century) seemed to the modern understanding morbid or childish, dealing as it did exclusively with man's inordinate sense of ownership in some female or desire for such ownership. Moderns either laughed at such stories (also at the Elizabethans' preoccupation with the cuckold theme) or were bored by it, as they were with Boccaccio's tales of sly, deceitful men and women and the cheats they plotted in order to sleep with some forbidden person.

The elimination of the property idea simplified enormously the sex relation. The female no longer traded her sex for support by a man or for social ambition. Neither man nor woman was rendered more desirable as mate because of what he or she might happen to possess other than intrinsic qualities. The coarse disturbance of material advantage—of profit—being eliminated from the sex relation it reverted to its natural and strongest element,—that of mutual attraction and mutual fitness, of compatibility and charm,—to the essential and the eternal.

Just here came the most curious and distinctive psychological differentiation between the new civilization and the old, a change however not entirely incomprehensible to a few members of the older society. For there had always been occasional instances of the perfect sex relation in every previous form of human society,—a relation based on mutual attraction, mutual help, and respect, unaffected by material considerations, transcending mere physical appetite.

Such happy lovers and successful mates always realized that love was not simply a state of nervous and physical excitement, to be created with any chance comer of pleasing form. They knew that even the physical satisfactions of love might be had

in perfection only when both the man and the woman were mutually desirous and mutually loving apart from desiring gratification. No man—still less a woman—might have a happy experience in love with a companion not attuned to a like pitch of desire and similarly inflamed by a single concentrated passion.

Yet this basic condition of all successful sex experience had not been generally recognized—witness among many proofs the institution of public prostitution!—in the old dispensation where so many men and women were wont to satisfy purely animal cravings wherever they could. It was commonly held then that “sex urge,” without what were contemptuously called “emotional thrills,” was sufficient for self-satisfaction (and in most cases even of lawful matrimonial intercourse between the sexes nothing more than self-gratification was sought!). But now that sex had become quite free, without either social or economic inhibitions, those superior types of human beings who demanded something more than physical satisfaction might find mates with whom to attain emotional ecstasy as well as physical release. More exact unions were aimed at and accomplished. And once the delight of such emotionalized unions had become customary—also easily obtainable—less the brute sex rut, emptying itself in legal and extralegal channels as of old, became possible.

Thus all sorts of refinements of sex relations had developed. “Love” was greatly evolved under these circumstances, as well as simplified. Every refinement of the love relation being cerebral led to a greater degree of singleness and continuity of union. Naturally not all persons developed at the same pace or attained the same levels. Many of the coarser types of erotic indulgence persisted, especially in out of the way corners, where the newer concepts of satisfactory love relations had not yet penetrated.

Some men and women in the grip of the periodic sex rut still gratified their senses indiscriminately; although the great improvement in personal hygiene had gradually lessened oversexuality in the species; as such excesses harmed no one but the perpetrators they were not condemned, nor socially ostracized, nor were these indulgences concealed through shame. Such sensualists were merely considered gluttons, coarse lovers, and they were pitied for missing the finer forms of sex union. . . .

As for jealousy, the perfect union being based wholly on mutual desire and mutual satisfaction the individual man or woman lost that keen sense of resentment because of failure to win another human being to his or her embrace. It was perceived that happiness could not lie in that direction for either. If mutual love was not aroused there was no incentive to a one-sided covetousness, and revenge when its object was unfulfilled. Wherever, as with children or pet animals, jealousy persisted it was deemed a subject for laughter. Thus the shoe was put on the cuckold's other foot! It was obvious that nobody could take from another what that one had never really had or once having enjoyed had failed to retain. So jealous wives and sweethearts, alimony hunting and breach-of-promise harpies—those ridiculous and painful characters of Christian civilization—who sought to obtain by law a money compensation for illusory "rights," had entirely disappeared, to the vast improvement of social decorum and decency.

Not everybody, naturally, was able to obtain the perfect union desired, any more than other great prizes, but failure in love life was neither humiliating nor a cause for hatred and revenge. Those human emotions, so wasted in older societies, now went directly into the enrichment and refinement of sex relations, which existed in an extraordinary variety

and closeness of adaptation to the personal needs of the individuals concerned.

There were no longer the rough categories of "married" and "unmarried," of "pure" and "licentious," of licit and illicit relationships, mistresses, prostitutes, etc., into which society had once tried to compress this most delicate and basic of human relations. Instead, an infinite variety of subtly discriminated relations had taken their place, each individual. Instead of the lover proposing to himself (or herself) the stale categories of marriage or "free love," their imaginations played about the ideal of the unique form of union possible for them. Instead of an illicit "affair," ephemeral and coarsening, or the dull perspective of an uncongenial marriage, half economic bondage and half sexual combat, they envisaged themselves as lifelong lovers, with an extended vista of ripening years—if successful. But if for any reason this aspiration was defeated neither humiliation nor bitterness resulted to prevent other, more suitable engagements with life. It was notable, however, how many of these modern matings, not merely among the child-bearing who had the buttress of offspring, but quite as numerous among the sterilized who had nothing but mutual consent to bind them together, endured monogamically through long periods.

Those who broke off a union and embarked upon another were not derided nor despised. When infidelity—or even promiscuity—occurred such license was by private understanding and passed unnoticed. The premium upon deception or furtiveness in sexual matters had sunk to the negligible. Why be sly or deceitful or hypocritical about something when the individual gained nothing by it but self-contempt?

Thus sex in the new world was something much less than it had been in older societies—and something infinitely more!

And much time was saved, for the individual was no longer worried about his sex life.

Veronica was sipping a glass of fruit juices and nibbling at one of the delectable new varieties of vegetable fruits that had become a popular form of breakfast dish. The table beneath a thickly-leaved old laurel tree was strewn with flower petals of an almost black-purple color that contrasted with the pale green lacquer of the table. Some of these petals were as large as saucers, and on them were spread out ginger-colored wafer bread and coral berries.

On the ground beside Veronica crouched the slight figure of the girl Alisa, her head resting against the older woman. There were traces of tears on the girl's sensitive face. When Felix appeared Veronica smiled at him and indicated a seat across the table.

"Why so late, Felix? You are usually among the first."

"I should have done better to come here directly instead of straying from my path!"

Thereupon he related briefly his visit to the Lethal Temple and his conversation there with old Claude. . . .

"And in the end I had to leave him to his fate. Too bad that after his long life—not badly spent on the whole—he should fail to make his personal account balance like that!"

"You remember that his only son came to the same conclusion a few years ago."

"I had forgotten."

"He missed getting his Permit and had some trouble with a girl—something like that. . . . Claude's wife left him after the birth of that one child, preferred another mate, and Claude instead of following her example and making a new adjustment had himself sterilized and shifted about with one woman

and another. . . . There must have been a strain of melancholy in the family."

The old man's face became grave as he listened to these details of his old friend's misadventures. He murmured dully,—

"I wonder if there are many like him, believers in the essential evil of human existence?"

"I have run across a few of them here and there," Veronica admitted, "but considering the prevalence of some form of insanity in many of the stocks from which modern humanity has descended it would take far more than a mere thousand years, even with our strict control of breeding, to eradicate all such traces of morbidity from the human family. There is always sufficient strain and stress in even the luckiest life to bring out any latent weakness. . . . Well, Alisa!" she remarked interrogatively to the girl who had risen from her crouching position and was gazing fixedly at the far horizon. "You had better run along; I'll overtake you at the Hygiene building in a few minutes."

The girl without bidding either one adieu set off under the trees, with the fixed stare of the sleepwalker. When she had passed out of sight Veronica said,—

"It's hard for her to make up her mind."

"Her appeal failed?"

Veronica nodded.

"Everything was done to stretch the requirements in her favor. They even sent all the data to the Bagdad and Delhi laboratories for an impartial study. The reply was the same from both,—'an unwise risk.' So I've been trying to brace her up to have it done this morning and over with it!"

"I hope Paul cares enough for the girl to stick to her," the old man remarked.

"Paul has an A one record with the double star. He would

be a great fool if he did have himself sterilized. His children will go far!"

Felix winced slightly at his companion's bluntness.

"There are other blessings, other preferments than that of parenthood," he protested. "You yourself did not choose another mate after your man was killed."

"Remember I had had two children and ten happy years already!"

"And I hope a few happy years since, without babies," Felix suggested tenderly.

"Another kind of happiness, that of a calm eventide. . . . Perhaps better than when I was bearing my children." She smiled back at the old man reassuringly. "There is a sureness, a richness to love in the maturer years that one never dreams of at Alisa's age. There are so many unexplored ways of loving to be discovered then! . . . But I must hurry over to the Hygiene laboratory to see that this little girl doesn't flinch, and then get back to my job. . . . When are you coming over to see my neophytes?"

"Perhaps this evening if the council meeting isn't too long."

"Good! You must spend the night. The girls and some boys are putting on a great show and will be delighted to have you there."

The old man adapted his nimble step to Veronica's nervous stride, as they followed the winding path beside the lake shore that the girl had just taken. . . .

"I don't believe in sentimentalizing these little personal contretemps," the woman began in her pleasant positive voice. "Even if Paul should prefer not to lose the chance of begetting his own children, that is nothing for Alisa to snivel about. She is a clever, attractive little thing and will find plenty of young fellows in her class ready to make love to her, if she wants that! And she is free to take up any sort of work she is

fitted for. She could join the Expeditionary Force and run a camp in your new continent. . . . Compare her fate with that of the superfluous spinster woman in the old world, who had to become a school-teacher or nurse or interior decorator, and if she wanted sex had to sneak it in illicitly by some dirty subterfuge. No, there is a great deal to be said in favor of the sterilized life for most women."

"All the same when a girl wants to have children like Alisa it is hard on her to be told that for some obscure scientific reason she is not fitted to have them. . . . I wonder if we have not gone too far, if our tests have not become too rigid and mechanical. Those biologists are terribly cocksure fellows, yet the history of their science shows clearly enough how often they have had to change their notions about the laws of inheritance. . . . They may not yet have hit upon the ultimate truth as to the proper number and arrangement of genes for favorable reproduction. I feel inclined to give these rejected girls a chance in the New Continent."

Veronica stopped and turning squarely about looked critically at her companion.

"And let them have all the children they could, no matter what the quality was!" . . .

Veronica's laughter was tinged with a silvery scorn that made passers-by turn to look at the pair, which was strictly contrary to good modern manners. . . .

"Pretty soon, Felix, you will be coming out as an Expansionist and an advocate of free matings!"

"You know I don't mean anything like that. . . . But why not let every woman have at least one child—and then if necessary sterilize them? . . . It is true that occasionally highly desirable variants result from unpromising matings. . . . Many instances of that exceptional organism which used to be called

genius were the fruit of extremely uneugenic parents. . . . Somehow the race stream does purify itself of taints—”

“After many generations, having broadcast inferior strains meanwhile that society has to contend with!” Veronica broke in witheringly. “I am amazed at you, Felix! . . . Don’t you talk this kind of stuff to my girls. They would think you are getting senile!”

With this last dart she disappeared into the outer court of a low building, leaving Felix to pursue his way to his own quarters among the laboratories and the museums at the farther end of the university compound.

The Public Hygiene office was one of the earlier buildings situated near the site of old Khartoum on a gentle rise of ground beside the White Nile, which now emptied into the Lake as well as the Blue Nile. The winding course of this great river could be traced from the elevation on which the Hygiene building stood far to the south, reaching out like a sluggish serpent towards the distant heart of the continent. On either side lay the fertile fields that supplied the metropolis with all that variety and abundance of materials needed for its existence (for although transportation was swift and cheap it was the aim of each modern community to serve itself as far as possible in all primary substances). The skillful use of irrigation and of reforestation had converted what had once been largely a sandy desert into one of the most highly fertile regions of the world. . . .

The Public Hygiene building being one of the oldest structures in the new city was at some distance from the center of the university settlement. It was in what was called “old style,” built, that is, of blocks of a reddish sandstone brought from distant quarries in the North, but not of the oldest style, a few specimens of which in mud blocks still survived. The

red surface of the building which must have been at least three hundred years old had been scoured by the hot winds that were common before reforestation. These weathered surfaces were now draped with flowering vines that cascaded from the low flat roofs and fell in festoons along the walls or looped themselves to neighboring palm trees making of the low building a picturesque ruin. The old Greek's eyes rested appreciatively on the irregular lines of the structure, which he preferred to the more recent and fantastic experiments in architecture at his own end of the settlement. These more modern buildings were made of a colored viscous substance that was poured and molded into any desired shape with incredible ease and rapidity, offering a great variety of design and color and lending itself admirably to external decoration.

This glasslike substance of all shades of color was much better adapted for building than stone, brick, or cement and far more durable than mud. But the ancient stone buildings erected four or five hundred years after the Ice Age, as comfortable living conditions had again become possible for human beings, had a dignity and charm to them that the newer improvisations somehow lacked. The people who had erected these old stone buildings had worked under severe limitations of transport and material, and severe limitations have always encouraged fine art. Their builders were happily trained on the best models of preceding civilizations, the Egyptian and the Greek, which almost alone had escaped the rigors of the glacial period. Most of the medieval and the renaissance building had succumbed and although some specimens of Indian and Chinese architecture had survived these did not appeal to the cosmopolitan taste of the Africans. . . .

The culmination of the Christian era had begotten those monstrosities of steel and cement of which the Americans especially were so inordinately proud. They built them arro-

gantly towards the sky to insane heights, terraced them and lighted them electrically, and lived out their lives, millions of them, within these immense human warrens. Now they existed merely in models reconstructed for historical museums, as curious examples of human extravagance, symbols of a dead civilization.

Felix never looked at them or at pictures of the city skylines made by them without marveling at the strange mentality of the race that could not only create such monstrosities, but take the inordinate pride they did in their achievement. The one supreme effort of that period had been towards size and numbers. To be sure the earth at that time was rapidly becoming packed in its more favored localities with a swarm of an inferior grade of humanity, but even in America the population had not yet reached the density where such huge barracks in which human beings were condemned to spend their lives were necessary. There was still sufficient free land over which to scatter their teeming millions had they desired to enjoy air and light and escape the swarming crowds. And many of the common evils of that decaying civilization might have been avoided or deferred indefinitely had their architects and engineers and rulers never perpetrated these abnormalities of building.

In modern days mankind no longer had the temptation to house themselves in such huge towers of steel and mud. Thanks to a slow recovery from the devastations of the Ice Age and the much reduced population to be cared for, herding was no longer either necessary or permitted. Society was in no danger of becoming choked with its own bulk, as had once been the case.

The builders of the new world with Egyptian and Greek temples and a few specimens of early renaissance building alone left for their contemplation had their imaginations

turned definitely from mere size, bulk, the fantasy of the monstrous, back to the earth where building properly belonged, to the adaptation of man's shell to his environment on the surface of this earth. Thus the architect and builder once more regained that sense of moderation and of purpose which prevented them from indulging in grotesque exaggeration just because a technical command of their materials permitted such extravagance and because a diseased state of society found profit in so housing humanity in immense towering barracks. The modern builder sought rather to hide his structures, to merge his creations with the earth, in color and design. No longer was the "individualistic" whim of the architect or owner tolerated.

For building of any sort was now considered a public affair in which the best interests of the community as a whole must be considered. Plans for any new building or for alterations of an old one must be submitted to different controls, representing the interests of landscape, architecture, sanitation, etc., in order that nothing disfiguring or wasteful, that might interfere with the symmetry and harmony of the community, should be perpetrated. And if by accident a displeasing or useless building was erected, it was as easy—and as cheap—under modern conditions to remove as to erect buildings, and there being no vested interests to cater to, a modern community could reform its outer garment as completely and as often as desired, just as the individual renewed his clothes. No building was considered untouchable just because it had got itself erected! If anything better could be suggested, if the occupied space was wanted for something more convenient or beautiful—the two aims were not believed to be antagonistic—the undesirable building was quickly demolished by the use of acids sprayed from the air and concentrated heat so that

in a brief time a substantial structure would crumble from sight. . . .

The pervasive cupidity that had been the key motivation of all old world cultures being removed, the private interests of the individual were not permitted to block whatever was believed beneficial to public welfare. So the whimsies or the greeds of individual citizens were never allowed to disfigure the ensemble determined for the community. The details of modern economy differed so universally from what had prevailed in the old "individualistic" societies that it would be impossible to enumerate the manifold changes that had taken place in man's treatment of his physical habitat.

No longer disfiguring transmission lines were strung haphazardly like gigantic spiders' webs across every horizon, for they were no longer used to transmit power. No longer stacks of brick or cement towered into the blue sky emitting clouds of dirty smoke! No longer was the surface of the earth crisscrossed with a web of ugly cement highways, unshaded and lined with unsightly shacks. Almost all transport was through the air, which was both cheaper and swifter, and advertising was not needed in any form and would have been considered a breach of social good manners. It was not considered either sensible or civil to bore another with insistent and extravagant claims on behalf of this or that human product. Sozodont toothpaste or Phaëthon gas or Neapolitan icecream or Cleopatra cigarettes, or any of the impudent promotions of the skilled advertiser, no longer were blazoned and dinned into the human consciousness. For there was no longer any necessity—or any profit—in selling anybody anything!

The factory and its melancholy satellite the factory town had long since disappeared. Thanks to a controlled and orderly development of industry, making use solely of the best technological discoveries, the omnipresent factory that at one time

threatened to eat up society like a cancer had been reduced to unobjectionable proportions. All necessary goods—a great, great many things once made and foisted on mankind were no longer wanted and others were made by hand—were manufactured in small unobtrusive establishments placed where they could function without being public nuisances and ruinous to the happiness of their operatives. For men no longer lived to work or slave for others nor worked and slaved in order to get a bare subsistence.

Subsistence, and more, was guaranteed with life itself. And ideas of comfort and personal satisfaction no longer required anything like the bewildering complexity of goods once considered necessary for human happiness. The modern mind would not know what to do with at least eighty percent of the contraptions and gewgaws and pretentious gadgets once to be found in American stores and warehouses,—whose intensive multiplication was believed necessary not merely for human happiness but for the continued working of human economy! They were in fact, at least three-fourths of them, mere rubbish cluttering the earth and created to satisfy appetites that had been unhealthily stimulated in idle minds by meretricious advertising. It was truly remarkable how many of what had once been considered “essential economic wants” had been eliminated without diminishing any real mental or spiritual interest. Rather with the effect of quickening these and affording more time for their enjoyment, as in ancient Greece where the common citizen could sit entire days in a theater listening to tragedies and comedies. . . .

To this conclusion Felix invariably came in his meditations over the contrasting civilizations of the past and the present, which he had made it his business to understand. The present was in a sense a return to the civilization of his ancestors that

had once held sway for a few happy centuries in a corner of the ancient world. There as here the public rather than the private building received the efforts of architect and builder. There as here men were content with a simple form of material life, judged by later standards, but they thronged their beautiful temples and theaters and places of public assembly. There as here men did not weigh their civilization solely in terms of "economic wants" to be "satisfied," but in ideas, in æsthetic and spiritual satisfactions. . . .

In short modern men differed from any of their forerunners on the earth, enormously, so greatly that although they possessed the same physiological and biological characteristics, and many of the same limitations as their human ancestors, they could hardly be described in the same terms or their life compared with what once had been called life. From the moment of waking at dawn until at nightfall he fell into sleep, modern man thought different thoughts, felt different impulses, formulated different purposes from old world men,—lived in a physical environment, with a mental preoccupation totally other than let us say the *New Yorker* of 1940 A.D.

Naturally these profound changes in human mentality expressed themselves most obviously in the environment which men made for themselves. Being spiritually such different creatures men must perforce create corresponding differences in their physical shell. But as always one must come back to the ultimate core of differentiation,—the quality and the content of the spirit activating the human being. Modern man with his modern spirit within shaped for his needs a society that in detail as well as a whole had never existed on this earth before the last Ice Age . . . a much more varied and harmonious and pleasing one be it said! . . .

"It all comes down to the fact," the old Greek mused as he approached the entrance to his own building, which had

recently been erected to serve the company of specialists at work on the Great Expedition, "to the basic differentiation between our modern world and that so-called New World that we intend presently to excavate, which is—"

"What?" demanded a deep voice, coming from a handsome powerfully built middle-aged man, who had overtaken Felix's leisurely footsteps.

"Was I talking to myself, Chief?" the old man laughed. "That's a trick I got as a boy, repeating the lines of Homer for a country schoolmaster, who had revived the habit of committing literature to memory. I used to run about the fields of my native Ceos declaiming Homer. . . . Like most old folks I must be reverting to the habits of my youth!"

"And what is the basic differentiation?"

"Why, just this commonplace: today man is no longer bound to self. We no longer consider everything presented to us from a personal and subjective point of view. It is not always *my* and *mine*, but *ours!* Not *my* building, *my* business, *my* home, *my* wife—but *ours.*"

"*Our* wife too," mocked the younger man.

"At least *hers* as much as *mine*. . . . It's no longer an exclusively *my* kind of world. And that's very good!"

"That wasn't the doctrine of that American President, one of the last, whom they called 'the Great Engineer' because he ran them all into the abyss. You recall him—he was called Boover or Buncom or something like that. You remember how he talked incessantly of the virtues of a 'robust individualism,' which meant letting the strong eat as much as they liked at the expense of the weak?"

Felix nodded.

"Exactly! And his doctrine led straight to chaos. . . . Lately I have been reëxamining the records of his time, which was a quite crucial epoch for that vigorous people. Not merely this

Buncom fellow (who I take it was intellectually a quite commonplace person, not to say stupid) but most of the leading minds of that epoch sincerely believed that only by the exclusive appeal to man's greed, to the individualistic spirit, could mankind progress and society be held together. And with this obsession rooted deep and constantly encouraged by education—although there were innumerable contradictions to their philosophy which they ignored—they made the most monstrous civilization ever known, built on grab, individually and nationally, until it suddenly, swiftly collapsed, confuting their theories. . . .

“How astonished old Hokum would be if he could drop in on us this morning and find a world running with a tenth of the fuss and misery and clutter of his, without his one magic prescription of stimulating human greed and cupidity and lust for power. I'd like the opportunity of showing the Fat Head (as they also called him!) that the sole way to make things move is not by bribing human selfishness. . . . But I am dawdling unconscionably this morning. I have spent most of the forenoon in ways that Mr. Hokum and his advisers would no doubt have considered pure waste. I haven't performed a single 'constructive' act—you know how fond they were in America of that word 'constructive'? They thought it meant the same thing as 'creative'! Build something no matter what was their idea. They were fearfully 'constructive'!” . . .

Their slow progress to the old man's private wing was halted in one of the forecourts of the widespread building by a group of the younger workers, who were sipping refreshing sherbets in the shade. They hailed him and nothing loath the old man and his companion joined the circle around the large bowl of foaming purple snow.

“A new wrinkle,” one of the younger men explained, handing Felix a cup of the purple ice. “We don't have to send to

Uganda or the Himalayas any more for pure snow. They've got a snow machine and set it working in the cellar to make ices and sherbets."

"Tastes enough like the real article," the old man agreed sipping his sherbet with satisfaction. . . . "Anything new from over there?"—a swift turn of the head indicated the direction of the old New World—"I haven't had any bulletins this morning."

A young woman secretary replied,—

"One of the preliminary scouting parties returned yesterday to New York headquarters from the far West. They report that as we foresaw the thawing of the Ice Cap has proceeded quite irregularly. All the high plateau from the Arctic Circle southwards as far as the site of old St. Louis is still a glacial swamp."

"That simplifies the task by so much," the old man commented indifferently. "As far as I can recollect there was very little in that great central plain of enduring human interest or value."

"How about Chicago?" objected one of the young men, who was attached to the topographical survey engaged in preparing enlarged copies of old North American maps for the use of the Expedition. "I should suppose that might be worth digging up."

"It is reported to be well within the swamp area, which is slowly draining out towards the ocean. . . . You will have to restrain your curiosity about that old hog-butchering metropolis another decade or two, Arnold!" remarked another of the young men.

"No great loss," Felix commented softly. "It was always a kind of swamp there, socially as well as physically. It came from a swamp at the end of the last glacial period and it has

sunk once again into its native ooze. Let it stay there for another while!"

"But towards the close of the Christian epoch there were around three millions of people living there," retorted the young man who had been addressed as Arnold. "A marvelous conglomerate of every known living race on the earth at that time. I have just been looking at a learned treatise published in 1892 on the number of different languages spoken in the city. . . . Chicago had many laboratories, more transportation systems than any other city in the world, and of course numerous specimens of those skyhitting buildings Americans were so fond of erecting even where they had plenty of land. . . . Also I have read of a collection of fantastic structures they made to celebrate their one hundredth birthday, things with immense wings like birds in colored stripes and roofs supported by chains. Fiercely grotesque things like drawings perpetrated by small children—but they must have been curious all the same. What they called 'modernistic' architecture!"

"Well, you'll have to dive into the mud to find them," somebody interjected.

"Chicago always considered itself the most progressive of all American centers though one of the newest," continued the advocate of Chicago.

"I know, I know," Felix murmured in a rather impatient tone. "It was fond of boasting, a very talkative city, always blowing its own horn as they used to say in their *argot*. All citizens of the United States did that more or less, but Chicago was the worst blower. . . . I can't seem to recall any distinguished person identified with Chicago, however, anybody who left a name on the world record of achievement, except a woman who started there a famous experiment in social relations at the end of the nineteenth century, what they called a 'Social Settlement,' where some generous-minded persons of

the more privileged class tried living among the slave masses. An early sign of discontent with the prevailing philosophy of their own class! But for all her efforts the leading citizens among her contemporaries called her a crank, which was the term of opprobrium they used for anyone who did what the majority disapproved of. They considered her a dangerous citizen, although to millions throughout the world she was the only distinguished product of Chicago! . . .

“As I remember, Chicago’s one other historical importance was the melancholy episode of the anarchists, which occurred a number of decades before its end. They murdered with due judicial forms a little band of social rebels, whom they dubbed in their ignorant way ‘Anarchists,’ in one of those spasms of brutal fear that now and then swept through that enormous democracy. That event put ‘Anarchy’ on the map, so to speak, in the New World. What this people did in the way of persecution of harmless and often intelligent and admirable victims of their social disapprobation would take long to tell. . . . Yes, the fate of those anarchists remains for us of today the most significant fact about this old swampland city. For according to their notions we should all be called anarchists, everybody living in *our* new world, and we should be lucky if we had escaped with our lives, had we tried to live then as we do now! That *furor rubæ*—hate of the ‘reds’—was a fearful passion to arouse, all the worse because it was so blind, so ignorant of the thing attacked. . . .

“Later on there was another famous instance of this red fury in a more enlightened part of the country, where they murdered two poor Italians, one a shoemaker and another a fish peddler, because they admitted having social convictions contrary to the prevailing opinions about such matters, and they kept a couple of poor devils in prison—and what hells their prisons were!—for their lives out in California . . . oh,

the disease was rampant all over, especially severe after their great war to make democracy safe. . . .

"I am rambling on as I always do once I get started about these old social superstitions. The amazing thing when you consider it was that they thought themselves to be 'broad' and 'progressive,' their favorite words, and yet they were as unreasonable and intolerant, as narrow-minded and as brutal, as the Spanish fiends who ravished so much of the continent after its discovery and wiped out every trace of the interesting cultures they found there among the aborigines. There was little to choose between Cortes and his rapsallions and the leaders of American democracy who murdered the Chicago anarchists, did Sacco and Vanzetti to death, tortured Mooney in a California prison. . . . Well, thank God (as they used to say)—that God they were always calling upon to justify any special atrocity!—the world do move—forward at last!"

"All the same," the young admirer of old Chicago put in, "where there was so much doing—and all in one brief century—there ought to be something worth digging up and examining!"

"That I may say is a characteristic delusion of the colonially minded," the old man remarked placidly. "The American people more than any other of whom we have records were wholly under the delusions of grandeur, really convinced that mere size, mere motion, mere noise, was of itself significant, somehow important! That mere numbers and running to and fro aimlessly, volubility, big buildings, excitement, nervous exhaustion, all meant what they called civilization, human progress. Their learned men, rather I should say their university heads, boasted of the numbers attending their institutions as did the promoters of their sports. When finally distress overtook them, the unwieldy machine they had built became unmanageable, their richest citizen could think of nothing

better to do to help his starving, unemployed fellow citizens than to erect a mammoth entertainment park in a vast structure towering into the sky! (That, by the way, is one of their monuments I am most curious to look into, if there is anything left in its special rubbish heap.)”

The group under the scathing denunciation delivered by the old man in cool impersonal tones became silent for a few moments. The old Greek resumed in culminating mockery,—

“Those busy Chicagoans, the most intelligent among them, would be surprised to find us sitting here sipping our cooling ices in the forenoon of a busy work day, chatting about ancient history as we have been doing! How they would have denounced us as wastrels, as after tossing off one of their infernal fiery liquids they rushed for an elevator to whisk them forty or fifty stories to an office artificially lighted, warmed or cooled, there to sit ‘in conference’ about nothing of any human importance!

“And yet I dare say we moderns get through three times as much real work, weighed in the measure of enduring accomplishment, each day as any of their high pressure executives ever thought of doing. We have eliminated so much waste motion, so much mere paper handling, the dictating and reading of letters, so much futile hedging and scheming for personal advantage. They might have admired many of our labor-saving machines, but they would have used the leisure thus won for more futilities. They could not have understood our indifference to mere flurry and bustle, to busyness in itself, nor have valued our ideals of calm, serenity, contemplative thought, nor our sense of pure enjoyment in life itself, in the golden moments slipping through our ripened consciousness! . . . We could have done all their real work in a couple of hours a day, at the most, and have had all the rest of our waking time for real living,—for the theater for one thing, which

the Americans patronized only for the sake of an emotional stimulant, a shot to their jaded nerves. . . . But as always I ramble on, my children. Some day you will shut me up in a Lethal Chamber and let me talk there to the ghosts of the past to my fill!"

His audience laughed indulgently over the old man's consciousness of his desultory mood. Some of the group slipped away about their pursuits, but one of the young women who lingered exclaimed,—

"All the same I'd like to see anything so different from what we have today as that Chicago, even if it is buried in a swamp!"

"Be thankful that you are privileged to be sitting here within sound of that fountain, with this amazing display of onyx-colored walls, sipping this delicious ice! . . . I suppose Chicago did epitomize the life of that strange American people, of machines and men and women turning themselves into more machines, of scurry and whirr—and constant physical discomfort. They had developed the machine ideal of life more completely to its terrible conclusions than any other people, although all were hellbent (as they used to say) to follow in the same path to destruction. They were all aping the American civilization at the end in the pathetic delusion that in some magic way the machine would save them. It did not! It could not save a mankind cursed with that mentality, with that tradition. If the Ice Age had not intervened the result would have been much the same—dissolution. Until men got themselves new minds and became masters, instead of slaves of their own creations, they could not make the New World, which is ours.

"That Chicago place, now a mere spot on the map of a huge glacial swamp, was chiefly remarkable, not for its big slaughterhouses for preparing animal foods—a noisome habit in itself!—nor for its lofty buildings, nor for its busyness and smoking chimneys which covered it with a filthy sooty cloud

much of the time obscuring the sky, but as a terrible illustration of the squalid result of an inhuman social system ruthlessly applied. There in Chicago the industrialized Christian system of living attained its full development. And Chicago even before the sudden advance of the Ice Cap overwhelmed it was rapidly reverting to primitive savagery.

“For the richer classes, who had benefited by machine exploitation of human resources, and their political hirelings had so completely looted its civic treasury that there was no means to pay for essential services. With their police disbanded who had formerly kept a semblance of order, their firefighters dismissed, school-teachers starving, even their water system failing because of lack of coal, the city was slumping with appalling rapidity to a condition of filth, lawlessness, and degradation comparable only with the slower descent of the Roman Empire into barbarism. Chicagoans had always gone armed about their private affairs (contrary to law)—an inheritance of pioneer days—but now there were formed hired gangs, of former police and other thugs, who sold their services to anyone who could afford to hire them for his own protection and for robbing others, very much what always happened on the break-up of every older civilization.

“This condition of violence—we might call it social chaos—was already well under way in 1933 A.D.—the very year, you may remember, in which Chicago was celebrating in those weird structures along its lake its centenary. . . .

“No, no, I am more and more convinced the longer I study their own records that there can be little or nothing in that particular swamp of the old New World worth uncovering, nothing that we have not already descriptions and models of in our ethnographical museum. And I hope that you youngsters are not getting too much excited over what we are likely to find in any portion of the North American continent. There

was an extraordinary increase in the number of lives over that part of the world's surface between its first discovery by Europeans and the last Ice Age, say, for four and a half centuries. But singularly little of enduring human value, of beauty, was created there.

“Those United States of America (to give them their full official title) were hardly more than a huge experiment station in what they called the democratic form of government. We should consider their social system anything but democratic in its working out! It degenerated into one of the worst forms of social tyranny the world has ever seen within its brief sway of less than two hundred years. . . . So much the less digging for us to do in order to see what it was all like. But there are some places in that forgotten continent which I am more eager to visit than the site of New York or Chicago or Washington! You will hardly guess what they are nor why I am so keen to see what has happened there during the thousand years they have been out of the known world. Fortunately these places were not covered by the glaciers and human society in one form or another may have survived in them continuously all these centuries. If so, it will be well worth while to know what it is like. . . . Let us go over to the map room and have a look at them!”

The circle that had formed around the table where old Felix sat followed him through the intervening courts to the quiet and remote corner of the great building where Felix had his own working quarters. . . . It was in this unhurried, yet un-wasteful, manner that many of the most important affairs of the modern world were conducted, through exchange of ideas in informal meetings like this one, rather than in stuffy committee rooms or across a desk in a dark office! (Significant,

perhaps, it was that this ill-omened word never occurred in the working vocabulary these days!)

Government was no longer conducted either in hidden bureaus where formerly the endless coils of futile red tape were wound and unwound, nor in legislative halls filled with the raucous sounds of disputatious and insincere voices, but in the open, outdoors—as in the days of remote antiquity, in the “piazza” where everybody gathered to hear the news and exchange views, and make up their minds. In the new world all formalities, prohibitions, routines were avoided as much as possible, all votings and tricky legal forms. Custom was law, and custom was subtly being created and molded everywhere, in the private home, the labor unit, the university laboratory, wherever men and women worked, lived, thought, communicated. The statute books of such a community as this of Khartoum would have been considered in the past meager, primitive.

Where in the so-called Christian world the effort had been to define in technical terms every proposal (often obscurely worded with the deliberate purpose to nullify the intention of the measure or confuse it), the modern idea was to instill beneath consciousness certain broad, fundamental conceptions of living, and then leave their applications to be worked out on the spot, not cramped within rules and legal terminology. To cheat, to steal, to deceive, to defraud as well as to kill or harm another must become difficult for the average human being merely to desire, not classified into an intricate category of crimes each with its peculiar and variable penalty. A properly born and nurtured human being would no more conceive of committing these antisocial acts than he would desire to fornicate with his mother or his sister, or degrade himself by indulgence in evil drugs. The more firmly such tabus, inner inhibitions, were developed, the longer they operated with

rare cases of infringement, the less it had become necessary to safeguard society with prescriptions from the harmful acts of its individual members.

The four useless professions, which had been the cornerstones of the social temple of old, had been relegated to the scrap heap of barbarism. First the military profession had become quite obsolete, now that no individual and no community had any interest in taking property from others. Even the police was hardly more than an honorary service for old men and women, who liked to fuss importantly over the small details of social housekeeping. Instead of maintaining a large body of highly trained soldiers and their officer class as a breeding ground of violence, these members of society were obliged to pull their weight in useful functions, thus releasing an enormous creative force which had been kept of old for purely destructive purposes.

Another great boon in the modern concept of life was that it had dispensed with lawyers along with law, which had become the veritable pest of former days, increasing human frictions and cross purposes, like disease-laden parasites. Legal experts, once feeding like maggots in the great gut of society, subtilizing and clouding human purposes, professionally bound to make wrong appear right and right wrong, had vanished. Literally their jobs had been taken away from them. All mature members of any society were supposed to know its guiding principles, which were so simple that any child understood them. They were, so to speak, the rules of the house, common decencies to be observed by all. All were equally interested in their observance and any neglect or contravention of them suffered immediately the discipline of social disapprobation, the most potent agency of correction.

The situation with regard to the two remaining learned professions, priests and doctors, was somewhat different. The

necessity for maintaining a class of superstition mongers had disappeared with the disappearance of crass credulity. While religious impulse in its essence of veneration for life and exaltation of all its ecstasies had enormously increased so that each individual had become so to speak a priest, the specific cult of superstition no longer required the maintenance of a large body of idle and useless and error-breeding clergy. It was recognized that religious cults with their priesthoods had been the cause of as much evil and discord in the world as had the military and the lawyers. Probably more! as the poisons which they had injected into human souls had been more deadly or soporific. There had been little to choose among the large varieties of cults that had once ridden humanity: whatever had been the purposes of their founders, all had invariably been perverted by their followers into instruments of mental and spiritual slavery. In the free air of the new world they had simply faded away, and those who might truly have once been drawn to the priesthood from pure motives of devotion now undertook some form of educational service or of medicine.

As for the latter profession, its present position was both more and less than it had ever been before. As the Service of Public Hygiene medicine was all powerful, having the supreme control of human society in its many forms, more influential through its control of the human stock than any other social activity. But as a priestly caste of pill givers who drove a very profitable trade in the days of superstition it had ceased to exist; seeking private gain from the fears of ailing persons was abhorrent to the modern way of thinking. Whatever doctoring had to be done to keep society well and efficient was performed by a highly trained body of experts, as a division of the Public Hygiene Control, and obligatory upon everybody. The medical profession, at least its more intelligent members, had realized before the end of the old régime that the profession had little

real knowledge of disease or of ways of controlling it; that most of what they taught and practiced was pure hokum, as bad as that of the priests, and that whatever they knew was good and effective should not be sold at a high price in hospitals and private clinics, but provided for everybody by the state freely.

The dire principle of "private initiative" had fought this view of the function of medicine furiously as it fought every effort to free humanity from the bonds of profit. But now that selfishness and greed had been eliminated as the primary motives of human conduct it was possible to make important advances in medical knowledge and practice. Moreover, the conception of the relation of medicine to mankind had changed profoundly. Where formerly it had been the main effort of the profession to keep the breath of life somehow going in derelicts, to patch badly made and ailing human bodies, it was now the first task of the Service of Public Hygiene to see that efficient bodies were bred and taken care of, to eliminate causes of decay rather than to cure temporarily broken-down bodies.

Thus medicine seemed to care less for the "sacredness of life"—and more! Those occasional instances of defective bodily organisms that still occurred were mercifully and promptly sent to the Lethal Chambers, as well as the far more distressing instances of mental and moral inadequacy. On the other hand, the maintenance of a high degree of physical fitness was universally considered a primary duty and illness, if not an actual disgrace, a serious personal disability from which one should either retrieve himself at once or take to the nearest Lethal Chamber. There was thus less sentimental softness about health and more efficient care of it, and the members of the Public Hygiene Board of Control had the highest prestige in the community. (One of their lesser duties was to suppress any

tendency to indulgence in quackery like Christian Science or psychoanalysis, or in individual doctoring and self-pity.)

One might describe the Public Hygiene Board of Control as the modern form of the Inquisition! The physical well-being of every individual as well as of society was thus brought under constant supervision to economic advantage: there was little loss of efficiency and labor hours in such a world. But a larger gain was in the improvement in mental hygiene. Not only had defectives and paranoiacs been eradicated, but neurasthenia which had made appalling inroads on the civilization of the later Christian era had been largely eliminated. A sound mind in a healthy body being the fundamental requisite for a strong society, thanks to the efforts for public hygiene, the modern world did not labor any longer under the terrible handicap of disease.

The gradual obsolescence of the four powerful professions of the old world, due to a large extent to a changed viewpoint about life rather than to any biological change in the human animal, human nature no longer being as it once was but rather as it always had the incentive to become, one would suppose that greater emphasis would be thrown upon the remaining profession, that of teaching. And in a sense that had happened to an extraordinary degree, which accounts for the importance of the Greek Felix and his colleagues, who were more like university professors of former days than anything else. But education itself had been transformed with the growing recognition of its supreme importance. It was no longer a method of training the young how to make their living, for that was no longer necessary. It was rather the conscious organized effort of those specially equipped to demonstrate the worth of life and its best values.

As has been said elsewhere, education did not cease in the

early twenties even for the privileged: it progressed continuously throughout the span of life. The individual received this education wherever he might be, whatever vocation he might finally undertake, from the first day when he was enrolled in a labor band. Of the large numbers released for normal creative living by the suppression of the military, the priests, the lawyers and the doctors (of the old school) the majority naturally went into some form of educational work. This, however, was not classroom teaching or lecturing or even research in university laboratories as was once the usual form of "education," for the practical was no longer divided by an artificial barrier from the theoretical. The efficiency of modern society was maintained and developed by a vast system of laboratories, which thus took the place not merely of government bureaus but of educational organizations as well.

Of all the classes in the old form of society, of all occupations, the teachers and university research men would have been most at home in the new, with one potent difference. The pedagogic and dictatorial habit of thought was alien to the temper of the new world. The pedant there would be considered a bore and be shunned. The self-importance of the old type of "scholar" would have been ridiculed as well as his tendency to petty bickering and conservatism. Towards the end of the older forms of society the universities, which should have been the homes of new aspirations and championed changes in the decaying social order, were rather instrumentalities of reaction, subsidized by the rich and powerful primarily to ensure the continuance of that individualized and privileged state of society from which their benefactors profited. Thus they lost their opportunity for influence and lost the respect of the society they were supposed to lead!

Yet the best university spirits of the old order would have felt at home in Felix's maproom peering over a representation

in relief of the ethnographical conditions of Central America at the beginning of the twentieth century A.D. . . .

“There!” exclaimed Felix placing his thin forefinger over a narrow portion of the map, “was the really vital cultural center of the old New World!” and the old man smiled, somewhat professorially, at the mystified expression on the faces of his hearers.

Chapter Four

HERE AND THERE IN THE NEW WORLD

FROM the maproom they adjourned to one of the libraries to consult an old book on the pre-Spanish civilization of Mexico. Here and in the adjoining rooms were preserved in special cabinets the comparatively few volumes that had survived in legible form from the old world. Most of the volumes in the cabinets were transcripts upon very fine vellum, practically indestructible, of such books as had survived the glacial period, having been found in out-of-the-way corners of the warmer parts of the earth or having been discovered buried in vaults under some ruin of the previous era. Every ancient book as soon as discovered was submitted to this process of transcription on vellum and yet the total number scarcely reached the total of books published in a single year of the last decades of the Christian era! Fortunately most of the cherished works of antiquity had survived because of their wide distribution, along with much that the modern mind considered merely curious or rubbish. It was thought that society was fortunate, on the whole, in not having more old books.

“One must winnow occasionally the mental efforts of the race,” Felix observed lightly. “Otherwise humanity would become buried in its exudations as I suspect was becoming the case towards the end of the old world. Quantity never implies quality, and the terrifying quantity of publications during the

last hundred years of the old system contained less and less of distinction. We have done well to relegate all that sort of expression to ephemeral pictures and sound records, have not embalmed it between covers to clutter our dwellings—and our minds.”

As the old man spoke he was gently turning the pages of an old volume, yellowed by time and almost illegible, when suddenly there fell from between two pages an oblong bit of yellow paper. One of the young men recovered it as it drifted to the floor and holding it up for all to see exclaimed,—“What’s this do you suppose?” Felix sent for a powerful magnifying glass and scrutinized the faded bit of paper closely. Then holding it from him so that all might see it, his mouth relaxed into a smile, he asked,—

“Can any of you guess what that once was? . . . It must have traveled a good bit to have got here!” Peering once more through the magnifying glass he read aloud,—“THE NATIONAL BANK OF NEW HAMPSHIRE . . . 1932 . . . PORTSMOUTH, N. H. . . . TEN DOLLARS!”

A young voice interrupted,—“It must have been *money*—there are strips of paper like that in the museum!”

“Just so! . . . That bit of faded rag once was what was known the world over as MONEY—the most potent single term in the old world. It was what ‘made the world go round’ as they used to say. . . . A promise to pay the owner of the rag ten gold dollars, for gold was the most desired form of money. There were always other forms of money besides gold and paper, silver, nickel, copper, almost everything was used as money at one time or another, even whiskey,—the stuff they drank to make themselves happy. Before they had money they used to exchange what they produced for what they wanted, and it was considered a sign of high civilization for a people to have money like this instead of doing their business by

barter. With this mankind could procure almost everything desired except peace or happiness! . . .

“Unfortunately ‘money’ didn’t stay stable. It had no value in itself, not even the gold pieces one could demand in exchange for this bit of rag. You could never tell for long what you might be able to buy with your money. Money fluctuated like every other value in society with both time and place, and these fluctuations were the cause of much uncertainty and misery in the old world. Clever as many of those people were in their way of doing business they never seemed able to stabilize their medium of exchange, with the result that some were always profiting at the expense of others less fortunate or less farsighted. Money seemed to run into a few large pools and lie stagnant there while the great majority suffered for lack of enough money to buy what those who had too much money had to offer. Consequently those with money not being able to use it suffered also and nobody knew how to break this vicious circle so that money could circulate freely and all could use it. A strange people!”

“Why don’t we have money?” another young voice asked wonderingly.

The older assistants smiled at this elementary question.

“What would you do with it? It wasn’t pretty and it wasn’t good to eat! We got rid of money because everybody having the right to what they needed there was no longer use for a medium of exchange as they called it. . . . But it is the money idea rather than the thing itself which interests me. Just consider the real meaning of the money habit: if you wanted anything from a pencil to a good meal or a place to sleep you must have some of the money stuff, carry it around with you and give it out for what you wanted. You lived and breathed literally on money. The monstrosity of such a slavery never occurred to the ancients: they were concerned only with how

much they could get for it or how little they need give of it for what they wanted. They thought almost solely in terms of money. One even gave money to women for the pleasure of their embraces, perhaps the most ridiculous use to which money was ever put! . . .

“If there had been justice in these money transactions, if everybody could have counted on receiving or paying exactly the same or equivalent values for identical articles and services and satisfactions money might have worked no more badly than many of their crude arrangements. But there never was any justice or equality either in what money would buy or in its distribution. Some, comparatively few individuals, were so advantageously placed that they had more money than other human beings quite as valuable in themselves. Those with money could buy whatever they wanted, all the desirable things of life including women’s caresses, while their neighbors who might contribute just as much effort to society went cold and hungry and miserable.

“In order to reconcile humanity to such an obvious absurdity the idea was carefully spread about and came to have a religious sanction that money was not merely an exact standard of absolute values, which of course it never was as these values were fluctuating all the time like the weather, but also a sound standard of human worth as well: if you had twice or ten times as many of these rag pieces, properly stamped, as your neighbor, you were thought to be twice or ten times as valuable a person to the community as your neighbor. . . . It went to incredible lengths of absurdity, this transvaluation of all human values into money terms. In America they even spoke of ‘hundred thousand dollar men’ and ‘million dollar executives,’ meaning persons whose services or functions commanded such huge sums annually, while other men doing precisely the same or similar or even more exacting tasks—and no less efficiently

—received for their efforts but a small fraction of such money rewards.

“Naturally this practice of rating men by the amount of money they could induce others to pay them for their services aroused not merely much envy and discontent, but also in the more disinterested and enlightened fragment of society much ridicule. So they invented another pretty little myth to pacify those disgruntled members of society whose services, however indispensable, were inadequately paid: they said that these latter were paid mostly in another sort of coin, by the ‘esteem’ that their efforts evoked, and so forth. Most of their preachers and teachers and inventors and many of their illustrious men of science had to content themselves with this substitute for money,—prestige and ‘esteem.’ . . .

“All that made the absurdity of the money standard of values only the more glaring. Yet they could not think themselves away from this crazy conception of money value for all human effort; they were floundering about in it worse than ever just before the final collapse of society. I believe that a main cause for the harmonious development of our modern life is that we have escaped all bondage to the money idea of value. Something a few of the more enlightened among the ancients used to dream about and talk about, but never even attempted!”

The old man’s audience listened respectfully to his observations about money, but without much interest as one listens to an academic discussion of any subject that finds no immediate response in experience. A youthful voice again insisted casually,—

“But why don’t we have money?—it must have been of some use.”

“For what? Just how would you use it if you had tons of this stuff?” (The old man waved the faded rag wildly.) “What

could you get with it that you haven't abundantly already?" Felix noting that the questioner was a girl added mockingly,—

"You can get all the clothes and anything else they have from the stores by merely asking for what you fancy. I can get a bone for Marco this noon and also my own nourishment by merely presenting myself at any one of the many food booths in the city, or I can have a ride to Timbuctoo on the Globe Express by merely proving to the proper person I have a real reason for wanting to go there . . . and so on! The only use of money is where there are more people with more wants in their lives than can be satisfied by what society creates; where some have to go without. Money was a crude device for separating those who want and can't have from those who can have whatever they want. But we have arranged matters so that there are never more persons in the world than we can adequately provide for and among them it is easier to distribute what we have without the interference of money, as in one great family. . . .

"Of course," he added as an after-thought, "we don't spend our time trying to incite people to want many useless things which they can't have—as the great business men of the American era boasted they did! It seems to us merely silly to stimulate appetites for foolishness that only a few can gratify."

Felix still clutching the faded ten dollar bank bill which had begun to crumble in the warmth of his hand exclaimed,—

"Think of the many poor devils who have pawed this wretched bit of paper or failed to get it or one like it! What fears and heartaches and what mean prides its possession has caused! How many ghastly and contemptible crimes have been committed to get possession of it or its like. How many lives have been ruined either because of having too many of them—or not enough! . . .

"Money was one troublesome device that the Ice Cap forever

put an end to. Our remote African ancestors had never used money widely, merely bits of shell and bead. Money was a European importation brought hither by our conquerors, the money habit. And during the era of readjustment, say, the first half of the modern epoch, men had too many realities on their hands to snarl themselves up with money systems as did the ancients. They had to create a sufficient and stable food supply, which was distributed according to need to all, not according to the ability to buy with money. During those first centuries of struggle against adverse conditions everything was done for the common good—as it had been among primitive societies of the old world—and the results of this common effort were shared in common, until the habit of considering the community rather than its individual units became so ingrained in human nature, so deeply rooted I trust within all of us, that we can no longer even imagine what use we could have for purely private ownership and acquisitions such as the money habit cultivated.

“For I attribute our present vigor and happiness, our freedom from the futile and horrible madness of war, as well as our rapid progress in the application of knowledge to life, as much to our having been for centuries released from the money habit with its degrading single standard of all human values, as to anything. Yes, as much as to our sensible recognition that too many inferior people allowed to be born are a burden rather than a benefit even to themselves. These two great differences in our modern world from all older civilizations, a controlled birth rate and freedom from an exclusive money standard of valuation, have done more than anything else to put us ahead of the old hit-or-miss society. . . .

“But I would not end on this material consideration, the obvious material advantages of our economy, of our solutions for those two age-old problems, population and money. The

essential aspect of the whole business has been the change in human mentality due to change in habits in these two vital matters. For always the fundamental solution of every human problem lies in the mind, in the mental reaction produced, which the ancients were wise enough to perceive, without, however, endeavoring sufficiently to use their discovery. We think quite differently about almost every detail of our lives because we have eradicated from our consciousness money fears, envies, hatreds, cupidities—the money preoccupation, with all its degrading and nefarious associations. This had become so inextricably interwoven in the former systems of civilization that one cannot read today a page from any of their books, except those on pure science, without realizing what a curse, an obsession money had become; how it vitiated every instinct, every thought that passed through human consciousness.

“I recommend you, each one of you, to familiarize yourself not with their intricate accounting and financial systems, which would be tiresome and meaningless, but with the social distortions wrought in individual lives by this curse of money to which they were born. You will not be able to understand much of what you will find in the old New World, without such a realization. Get one of their popular fictions, almost any one of them, and examine it with this thought in mind. See how men and women behave under the prevailing obsession of money values, money standards, both rich and poor!”

Old Felix, whose voice trembled with passionate intensity as if the accidental discovery of the yellowed banknote had aroused deep chains of conviction, paused once more and dreamily contemplating the bit of old rag in his hand murmured as to himself,—

“Somebody once thought he was happier for having this bit of paper in his grasp! How little he knew himself or the real

values of life! If he had realized how much woe, how many crimes this little piece of money symbolized, he might have burned it in the nearest fire! . . .

“But it is likely enough humanity would have never outgrown the delusion of money had it not been for the overwhelming catastrophe which necessitated a rebirth, a beginning once more under many handicaps of the long process of evolution. The Ice Cap rendered all forms of what formerly were considered valuables totally valueless and compelled mankind with a pitiless insistence to consider realities instead of tyrannous symbols such as this. Life was very stern on this earth, very simple, stark for hundreds of years, after the coming of the Ice Cap. Men learned their lesson well! . . .

“What I have been saying about their great money fetish would have seemed to ancient men and women more blasphemous than any insult to their gods. They would have immediately entombed me in one of their hells on earth, their prisons, or in their madhouses (where a majority of themselves would be interned had they lived among us!) for saying half what I have said to you today. In fact they did so treat the few enlightened persons who had the temerity to hint at these truths, beginning with the One the Christians called their Savior!

“All that far-off unhappy time has passed away with its freight of needless human misery, its universal restlessness, its sense of individual defeat and thwarted existence, its monstrous cruelties of man to man. All that has vanished. But let us never forget—”

As the old man's voice grew deeper with the solemnity of his warning he let slip the crumbling piece of paper, which fluttered downward to the feet of the young girl. “We must never for one moment forget how thin is the knife blade of difference which separates you and me and the full existence

we lead from the dreadful futility and anguish of that past. It is so narrow and yet so profound, this gulf, that of himself no single individual could cross it, without the consent of his fellows."

The old man jabbed his bald head with his forefinger significantly.

"The difference lies here! in just the way in which we sense life, feel it, think of it! That is all that divides us from the ancients. Our splendid accomplishments in knowledge, in the technique, the mastery of nature, of our environment, are little: they could have done as much as we have. They had almost solved many of the problems we have since solved and are still solving: had they not been thwarted and diverted by the incredible social muddle and wrongheadedness in which they lived and thought, they too would have without doubt captured those magnetic forces, which is our greatest mechanical triumph. *But* they were blinded, inhibited by their prejudices about true values; if they had succeeded in harnessing magnetic forces to their machines they would have used this enormous power to enslave the majority as they did with steam, with electricity, and other natural forces. . . .

"'Human nature being what it is,' they could think of no other way to utilize what their best minds produced than to sell its benefits according to the money standard. 'Human nature being what it is,' they were forever droning apologetically—and let it go at that! . . . With the same faculties that they had, with no better mental abilities than the best of them enjoyed, although a far higher common standard of efficiency, we have demonstrated the falsity of their dreary hypothesis that the human soul is forever locked within the prison of a limited capacity and morality. It *is* all in your mind, as they were wont to say in an irony of disbelief. In *our* minds, yours and mine and everybody's. We not only think differently with

these minds of ours; but we *are* different because we think and feel differently, from ancient humanity, because we have other dominant values in our lives than the money value! . . .

“Thus you may understand how important it seems to us, especially to us elders who are most responsible for interpreting and guiding the will of the race, what each and all of us think about life. We are more concerned with mental hygiene than with physical hygiene! Our modern culture is almost entirely a mental culture, a culture of the human mind from the embryo to the grave, instilling therein a succession of irresistible images, closely related, coördinated, and responding to each other, evolving into that thing which the ancients so much feared,—the Mass Mind. We are proud that in a million different ways we are molding this Mass Mind as we are being molded by it. Without our strict control of the Mass Mind we should become like the ancients, warring, struggling groups, doing evil to ourselves and to others. Within a few hundred years—or less—we should collapse as a society under the stresses and strains caused by the free expression of incoherent impulses and thoughts. . . . Each individual in the modern world is a cell of that Mass Mind to which and through which every vital impulse of our common life is transmitted, moment by moment, building on this earth Eternal Life, the greatest adventure that the human mind can conceive.”

One of the young men who worked in the New Food Products Division of the Food Supply Control had invited Felix to take his midday meal at the Laboratory Restaurant attached to the Division and sample a new product, one of the crosses of fruit and vegetable with which his department had been experimenting. The Coriolanus as it was dubbed had the outer appearance and pink flesh of a Persian melon, with the creamy consistency and flavor of a banana and some of the quality of

the sweet potato. One Coriolanus afforded a hearty snack for four persons. The young man expatiated on its calories and vitamins and other nutritive elements and received the congratulations of the old Greek, who indulgently poked a spoon into the recesses of the new dish before him.

"What we have accomplished since we began to cross vegetables and fruits is just the beginning of what we can do for our food supply," the young expert exclaimed enthusiastically.

"You will soon be combining your fruit-vegetable messes with rabbit and deer steaks, I suppose," the old man chaffed.

"That's not as impossible as it sounds," the young expert rejoined earnestly. "Even the ancients knew how to get all the necessary food elements for a good diet without the use of meats as protein. What has been lacking is the proper taste to deceive the palate accustomed to pure protein."

"Ah, that's what you are after, doing away with the use of meat altogether. I always suspect you scientific food mixers of being vegetarians in disguise. . . . It won't do for me, young man! I shall stick to my bit of broth and pheasant wings on occasion. I don't believe you will ever be able to suggest what a grilled rhino tastes like. And if your new concoctions succeed, what will our mountainfolk say when you have destroyed the use for their flocks of goats, sheep, gazelles, and so on? You have to consider the meat producers. You can't take their livelihood and occupation away from them, just because you laboratory fellows think you have discovered satisfactory substitutes."

"That's the way the American farmers of the busted era used to talk," the young man retorted quickly. "They believed they had an inalienable right to poison the human race with whatever food products they could make the most money on, like the hog and wheat! What's the use of a scientifically bred society if we are not to improve constantly its food products?"

We are merely seeking the largest possible variety of nutritious and palatable materials which can be easily produced and which we believe are best suited for modern conditions and the modern stomach, which thanks to lack of worry and other disturbing conditions and the almost complete abandonment of fermented liquors is quite a different article from the stomach of our ancestors. . . . As a matter of fact only a few old people like yourself, if you will pardon me for saying so, still hanker after a meat diet. Almost everybody in this warm part of the globe prefers other, less difficult foods."

"They didn't when this part of the globe was much warmer and less salubrious than we have made it," Felix grumbled. "Do you remember the large flocks the Arabs grazed, from which they got the principal article of their diet as well as their coverings and tent material? . . . No, no, young man, you can't so easily dispense with the wisdom of the old world. Man has experimented with his diet since he somehow contrived to stand on his hind legs and by and large that diet has always included a large amount of animal food whenever he could obtain it and of wheat and grain stuffs as soon as he was clever enough to grow them. There may be a wisdom in this choice of diet by humanity over thousands upon thousands of years that you and your lab companions don't comprehend!"

It being well known that Felix was a reactionary in the matter of diet the young man merely smiled, as he suggested slyly,—

"Then why don't we follow the same line of argument in regard to the propagation of the race? Ever since man went on his hind legs—and long before in all probability—he selected his sexual mate not for her eugenic qualities but for some hidden charm that attracted him to her—and her to him, regardless of the consequences. Why interfere by your laboratory notions of suitable matings with the instinctive urge of

nature to satisfy its sexual cravings? We certainly have discovered as much about food values as about the proper distribution of genes and about favorable and unfavorable stocks!"

The old man thus neatly caught on the horns of the dilemma laughed merrily and good-naturedly poked the young man in the ribs.

"Don't mind my bellyaching—you won't anyhow! Go on with the making of your plant abortions and find some uninteresting nut or breadfruit that will contain every essential element of human nourishment—but don't expect me at my age to swallow the tasteless stuff."

"We shan't. Don't worry! You'll have your meat broths and tough rhino steaks, fish fries, and all the other barbarous messes you hanker for as long as anybody is left among us who craves them. We have no idea of dropping animal foods from our dietary altogether at once. In some parts of the world they may never become wholly obsolete though in my opinion they are a most wasteful form of human food. . . . Don't they tell us that one of the contributing causes of the universal belligerency and quarrelsomeness of ancient civilizations was the general discomfort and poisoning of the human system with an excessively protein and starch diet? Meats and soggy breads gave such a universal indigestion along with the cane sugar and alcoholic ferments they absorbed that human beings existed almost always in an inner state of discomfort and revolt, which they merely worked off by brutal behavior. Nothing I suppose has done more to civilize modern man than the attention he gives to what he eats, his effort to create efficient and harmonious dietaries, instead of leaving that important question to cranks or private greed, or inertia and appetite."

"They used to eat whatever they could get," someone observed.

"Precisely! And it was nobody's business to see that one got the best materials for the occasion in proper proportions and quantities and properly prepared. . . . As I said, we in our food experimental stations have done more for human evolution than what is called Eugenics and Selective Breeding with all their publicity!"

At this outcropping of professional jealousy the company broke into laughter, to which Felix added,—

"Can it be that you too are an Expansionist?"

The young scientist blushed as he retorted,—

"I am not anything but a food expert . . . though I must say that as we have succeeded in diminishing by over a third the energy required for the production of an adequate food supply, individuals if they like should take advantage of that economy to make more children if they want them! Isn't it true that the present cultivable areas of the earth's surface could support very much larger populations in the modern way than the same amount of land ever before did?"

Felix nodded gravely.

"And instead of having more we have less than a quarter of the maximum population once supported on the unscientific plan of the ancients?"

"Allowed to exist, let us say," Felix amended dryly, "with starvation, at least malnutrition endemic always, accentuated occasionally by wars and famines and plagues! Not a happy state of affairs I should say."

"That would never happen, what with our many new economic products," the young man insisted.

The small audience at the table consisting of the Chief Engineer (who was known to be a meat eater and also an Expansionist) and some of his assistants laughed at the relentless logic of the young Food Expert. Felix grimaced, mumbling,—

"Now we are in for a long discourse on the value of the new food products and the purely vegetarian diet!"

"Not at all," the Food Expert retorted good-naturedly. "We don't have to advertise them as they used to do soft drinks and their other vicious messes—they recommend themselves. . . . I see you have eaten your slice of Coriolanus, Felix!"

"There is nothing else to eat."

The young man clapped his hands and to the boy who responded said in a loud voice,—“Have a thick steak grilled for our guest. This hot day it will sit snugly in his stomach”; and then quietly resumed his discourse while the company smiled,—“I take literally that old gag, ‘Man is what he eats,’ especially when he eats unwisely. . . . If that great American President in whose reign the collapse of the old order began had devoted his enormous energy to food control—in which by the way he first made his reputation—instead of trying vainly to bolster up the tottering capitalist system of production the total result might have been very different. . . . Your Americans had always been voracious meat eaters and were proud of the fact. Every stupid and evil inclination of their natures they attributed to their animal ancestors, forgetting that animals always live differently from semi-civilized man. If they had continued to live like animals they would not have felt evil effects from all the meat they ate. . . . Food is one of the cornerstones of society, and as long as anything animal is left in us we shall have to pay attention to its production and distribution and selection. Isn't that true?”

Felix acquiesced and added in his accustomed manner,—

“You haven't mentioned the most important aspect of the food supply, the social side.”

“Social?”

“Yes, social. Do you realize that mankind has always struggled and fought for an adequate food supply? All through the

past ages there was rarely enough at any one time for everybody to have all the food desired and much of what was produced was badly distributed or wasted in luxury so that the few had more than was good for them and the many not enough. . . .

“Older civilizations were closely dependent on the daily food supply. Even when sufficient command of the resources of nature assured an adequate supply, they did not know how to distribute it equably. During that last terrible epoch of unreason the food warehouses were bursting with surpluses of all important food products while millions starved or existed in a state of physical anæmia from lack of proper nourishment. Large quantities of precious foods were destroyed willfully, to keep prices up, because there was an insufficient ‘demand’ for them, i. e., enough people supplied with the means to buy what had been produced.

“Think of it! Millions of tons of sugar, wheat, corn were being destroyed and rich cornland plowed under while people starved for the lack of food. They could have fed every hungry mouth in the world, even with their wasteful notions of food, but they preferred to destroy it, let it rot, burn it, dump it in the sea, while men and women starved in silence. . . . You youngsters have only a vague idea of those terrible times. You hardly realize how different your world is from that one. You have never known hunger, want, anxiety for where your next meal would come from, nor even heard of anybody who ever wanted to eat and could not obtain food. Not one of you!

“With the ancients as with wild animals, food was the one foremost preoccupation of consciousness, more insistent even than sex gratification. All that worry over food has disappeared from human consciousness. One no more thinks today about a possible unappeased hunger than one does about a lack of necessary air or of pure water or of earth on which to walk or

of shelter in which to sleep or of clothing to warm his body. We recognize, as did a few in more advanced societies of the old order, that food is one of the essentials of any society—that is as long as we continue to get our energy renewed in this animal way, which we may not always. I hear rumors that transmission of nutritive elements through the sense of smell is being experimented with. Our friend here may yet be done out of his good job! . . .

“For the present, however, we like the ancients must keep up our food supply. We have always known that an ample food supply evenly distributed was the basis of any well-ordered life; that without assurance of this men revert rapidly to the animal state. Even the ancients had got so far as to provide in their larger communities some sort of almshouse where the starving could keep body and soul together, if the unfortunate ones were lucky enough to get into them. But we have gone far beyond that grudging recognition of men’s right to eat. Our life today is based on a simple formula: food, shelter, clothing are as necessary to man as air or water or sleep; a sufficiency of all these essentials must be provided for everybody allowed to be born, not doled out as charity in dribbles nor given in excessive quantities to a few, but free to all members of any society, in a reasonable sufficiency. Once that principle had been universally accepted the rest was simple, perfectly possible of attainment.

“As I have often demonstrated, even the ancients could have provided sufficient food for their bloated populations had they not been obsessed by their blind individualism. While we with our perfected techniques, our long experimentation with different food products, our greatly improved knowledge of the chemical factories within us have discovered sources of nourishment in many unsuspected elements, in roots and the bark

of trees, in weeds and fibers—and in such monstrosities as my young friend's Gargantuan melon!"

The old man smiled ruefully at the remains of the Coriolanus on his plate.

"There! I am talking like the Experts again, which may God forbid! Let our young friend tell you of the wonders of his food laboratory and his experimental nursery."

"Don't forget the transportation and distribution services!" someone called out.

"Nor the preparation and selection division!"

"Nor the efficient service," chimed a small waitress setting down before the old man a huge side of beef with red juice trickling from its exposed surfaces.

"Is this a smell nourishment experiment?" somebody inquired ironically.

"I wish some of you youngsters might be transported back into the old world. You might have sniffed in another way at such an opportunity to still your hunger pangs!"

"Come, Felix, you forget our disciplinary fasts. Nobody in the modern world gets by these days without knowing what an empty stomach feels like."

"Those fasts were instituted less to make you realize your habitual satisfactions than to train you in physical self-control and to let you experience some of the delights of pure contemplation unhindered by the digestive process. . . . I wish there might be more fasts and longer ones."

A prolonged whistle went up from the table. The monthly fast was one of the less popular innovations of recent years, among the youth of the community. Someone observed thoughtfully,—

"That was such a simple idea, food control, making food as free as air or light, I wonder that clever people like the Amer-

icans didn't think of it, especially when foods became a drug on the markets and they couldn't dispose of their surplus."

"They tried to give food away, spasmodically. But the control of food, you must remember, was a weapon of the powerful ones, one of the chief ways of fighting their wars. It was bound up like pretty much everything else in the nexus of private ownership and control, under what they were pleased to call 'individualism.' (As if it made human beings *individual* to starve them or allow certain ones to starve their fellows!) The error went back to what I call their animal conception of existence, which was their primary excuse for all forms of brutality and imbecility. Because the human being had his origins physiologically in the unorganized state of animals, after he had achieved the freedom of reason, nevertheless he used his animal origin as an excuse for his worst propensities. . . . Foods, the elements of existence, were property, like land, clothes, houses and every other necessity. Food and land were the two chief instrumentalities for the control of the many by the few; they were only surrendered to common use at the bitter end of their civilization when humanity began to flee from the frozen North towards the Equator, like the wild animals to which they were reverting! . . .

"Read the history of those terrible times, my friends, and see what it was like to live when you had to fight for your bit of food, for clothes to keep yourself warm and shelter from the cold. Then you will appreciate how different conditions are today, why we have the leisure to create Coriolanus and many other good things, why we don't have to spend our energies in maintaining large armed bands to prevent other envious peoples from destroying us,—and why we are sitting here this lovely summer afternoon discussing among other things how delightful life is instead of wondering what to do in order to exist miserably a little while longer!"

The group about the luncheon table had relaxed watching Marco, Felix's dog companion, sniff anxiously at the neglected side of beef. Perceiving his dog's controlled longings that manifested themselves in liberal drooling the old man put the meat on the floor within Marco's reach.

"Go to it, old man!" he encouraged the dog, who gulped hungrily the succulent meat. "See how he gorges himself! That was the way our ancestors acted when they had made a killing. They gulped the carcass in hunks and lay about for hours trying to digest the mess, as Marco will. No wonder they felt like fighting each other. I have learned from Marco more about our crude ancestors than from any of the old books. They weren't as decent as Marco, not as loyal and single-minded as a good dog. They were not as clean about their sexual appetites. Marco doesn't spend his days worrying about the next bitch he can get hold of as from their literature it would seem even the more civilized human beings did. . . .

"To use Marco as a further text, the ancients did slowly achieve a kind of grudging recognition of sympathy, the duty of the community to its own members of all classes. But it was not very real, nor farsighted. They put the old, the poor, the helpless, the diseased and demented, and the criminal into special prison pens, segregated them out of sight. It would have been kinder, more economical and sensible at the same time, as long as they had no intention of restoring these pitiful derelicts to normal life, to kill them painlessly at once as we do the occasional cases of defective births. Man's love for mankind, about which at times the ancients babbled so much, rarely rose above sentimentality into intelligent thought. . . .

"To return to animalism as the determining factor in their lives, that great nation which we are about to visit in order to uncover their so-called civilization was proud of its animalism—they called it 'individualism'—which meant the natural right

of the strong among them to act as they liked even when it produced misery for all. They more nearly broke into poetry over this ideal of the strong individual than about anything else. The right of the strong to do as he pleased, the duty of the weak to submit and eat what the strong in his generosity handed him! A truly animal philosophy, developed with the argument that human beings having once been just animals must retain sufficient animality to prevail over their rivals: the competitive way of life, the 'open career,' and all such nonsense. It suited the tastes of the strong, this philosophy,—the more animally endowed among the population. They throve by it and hence they taught it by example and by theory in their schools and through their publicity agencies, newspapers, articles, motion pictures, in every conceivable way! Glorification of lust, brutality, selfishness, which they called 'enlightened self-interest,' not so much enlightened, as we look at its works. . . .

"It is doubtful if human society ever could have broken its thralldom to that animal conception of itself and its direction, if it had not been compelled by an act of fate like the Ice Cap, which threw mankind back once more on itself, to start afresh with some of the necessary acquisitions of its misguided ancestors. . . .

"Women in that so-called Christian civilization were worse than men in their tyranny of the strong over the weak. Sexual selection, which among wild animals worked to preserve physically more efficient types, at least, had become utterly perverted by the civilized woman's preference for the merely successful mate, by her selecting some little sallow bald-headed, perhaps diseased, runt of a man to become the father of her children because he had money, or power, or social position. The male should be woman's god whom she takes into her womb to create other gods in his and her image. But when the

female takes a mate because he can give her an expensive motor-car and jewels to deck herself with and a great house and many hired slaves—or even free bed and board—the healthy principle of sexual selection is utterly thwarted. . . . Thus came about the rapid deterioration of what should have been the best stocks of the race. Few of the leading families of the later epochs perpetuated themselves; the ranks of power were maintained by constantly renewing the blood. . . . So much for ‘the open career’ as the Americans saw it! Greed, license, rot! . . . Well, well, one thing leads to another, as this came from Marco and my meat lunch!”

The old man paused and patted his dog’s silky head. Marco having devoured his dainty dish put his forepaws on his master’s knee and looked around the table for more such appetizing food.

“No, Marco, you have had enough; I don’t think you would relish a slice of the Coriolanus, you being yet unregenerate as to the superiorities of a vegetarian diet.”

Marco accepted the situation and having affectionately licked the old man’s hand ran around the table greeting in his friendly fashion his acquaintances among the group. Old Felix watching his demonstration, remarked,—

“I like to think that we have incorporated some of Marco’s traits in our new civilization: that we have learned so far as disposition goes more from dogs than men. Friendliness which is more necessary to mankind than love. Love is a rare and sacred and intimate achievement, but friendliness, the spontaneous good will and kindness that Marco has for everyone he comes in contact with, children especially. It shows his native kindness, his content with himself and his universe, without envy or suppressed egoistic desires, the will to dominate. Ours is a friendly world, that is the best that can be said of it! in contrast with that forlorn mess of hates and greeds and rivalries

and suspicions which humanity had created for itself in the era of those so-called Christians!

“What a travesty they made of the teachings of that saintly, lonely being they were supposed to worship! First they made him a God, superhuman, too fine to be born in the ordinary way of union between man and woman; then they worshiped him as a God and his ‘immaculate’ mother as a goddess; and professing with their lips their faith in his ideals their every act showed contempt of them. Christians! He who said that the only Christian died on the cross in Palestine was right. . . . But, my friends, I must be taxing your patience. I have been testing your ‘friendliness’ overmuch by running on like this about my favorite ideas.”

“No, oh no, no,” rose in a hearty chorus from around the table. The young Food Expert voiced quite sincerely the feelings of the group,—

“We all like to hear you ‘run on’ as you call it, because you embody better than anyone we know all that we like to think this modern world of ours should be. Most of us haven’t that close acquaintance with the older ways of living that you bring to every thought. So we don’t sufficiently appreciate what we have and are, the vast differences between our lives and ourselves, and what we might have been under the most favorable conditions in that strange old world which seems so remote from us. We take our ways of thinking and acting and feeling for granted because they work, because we are content and busy just living life as it is. . . . So you see you embody for us younger people especially just the essence of that spirit of friendliness you have talked about, together with a consciousness of the human past from which, luckily for us, we have all emerged. . . . It makes us realize our happy state all the more keenly.”

“And the fact that we can sit here unhurried chatting of

these 'unpractical' matters illustrates the point as well as anything could. . . . But you promised to show me some of your work in the experimental gardens, Timon. Come, Marco, these young people have other things to do besides listening to the vagaries of an old man."

Felix moved off in his loping gait with the Food Expert at his side, Marco making slow circles around them, while the group scattered in different directions. As there were no time clocks to be punched in the new Khartoum nor piecework to be got through with (nobody being paid for his efforts by the hour or the day), labor was looked on less as a dire necessity than as a natural occupation of the human being that began in the nebulous past of infancy and would continue like breathing for the full term of a normal life. There was no nervous haste about it, no sense of pressure from without or within. One worked, of course, as one lived and had consciousness: one did not drive oneself to work nor was driven by another. Given the health and intelligence that almost everybody enjoyed there was an irresistible urge within one to some form of activity. . . . Thus these young chemists and agronomes and common workers swung along the sanded paths towards their respective labor stations still talking as youth will of the notable person they had just left. . . .

"The old boy likes to gas a lot—but there is always something in what he says. He gives ideas a new twist."

"Because he knows such a lot not only of what is going on now but about the past. . . . I wish I had studied the old records more."

"Waste of time. They were a lot of sick, anxious, worried cripples, the best of them had little sense!" one youngster flip-pantly commented.

"All the same you get a more vivid notion of what we are

doing today in the world if you realize how it was with them. . . . That's why I am so keen to get into the Expedition."

"Got your appointment yet?"

"Not yet—but I think old Felix will let me go. I'm working him hard for it."

"So is nearly everybody!"

"Oh, I expect there's no hurry," another put in. "The glaciers haven't completely melted off the continent yet."

"Plenty of time for the North American continent—but not for me, boy."

"Felix must be about the most important man in the world today," one young man remarked thoughtfully.

"Rather! The Expedition is mainly his idea. A number of the older men were against undertaking it at this time because they thought it a waste of effort. We don't need any new land as yet. . . . But Felix pushed the scheme hard for scientific reasons. He wants to prove some of his social theories, I suppose, from what will be found in those buried cities."

"What theories?"

"For one thing his idea that the Ice Cap wasn't the real cause of the downfall of ancient civilization, only a merciful climax as he calls it."

"What was the cause then?"

"Can't you guess from his talk? It was the kind of life they had made for themselves, with self-interest as the big push behind. . . . He means to make of old New York a sort of Museum of Atrocities, of how not to live. I believe he has no idea of restocking the old New World yet awhile, just wants to keep it as an exhibit in case any of us try to fly the track and revert to the old savageries. . . . A kind of penal colony, you see, for those who can't go along comfortably in modern society!"

They laughed at Felix's clever notion or what they thought was his notion of utilizing the rediscovered continent.

Beyond that section of the new city where Felix lived on the shore of the Blue Nile there had grown up the extensive nurseries and experiment station in which the Food Expert and his companions worked. These Horticultural and Experimental Gardens were one of old Felix's favorite resorts. Often of a sunny afternoon he might be seen there accompanied by his hound, who had learned not to run wild over the beds. The land, copiously irrigated from the river, was extremely fertile. In the olden days of British occupation of the Sudan there had been a vast cotton plantation here where the English had planned to grow enough cotton to supply their mills and thus free the group of peoples under their rule from the necessity of buying "foreign" cotton. (Felix enjoyed recalling these comic and ironic details of the old economy: as if there could be anything national about useful products of the earth like rubber and oil and cotton! Yet wars had been fought for their possession as bloody as the earlier wars over religious beliefs.)

The site of the old cotton fields was now one vast garden or laboratory, as one chose to view them, extending for many miles between the two Niles. Here many related sciences and technologies were prosecuted, together—not apart. As Felix entered the grounds with his young companion this afternoon a group of the younger workers, members of the Junior Labor Brigade who were assigned to the Horticultural Gardens, surrounded one of the older directors, examining some object that the latter held in his hand. It was a pretty sight, the interested faces of the boys and girls peering over each other's shoulders in their eagerness to get a glimpse of what the director had found. He was explaining something to them. In this manner

not only was education carried on but the choice of a life occupation most frequently discovered.

Careful attention was given to the individual members of these junior labor gangs assigned to any particular industry, and whenever one of them evinced a special aptitude or interest in the work being carried on there, that boy or girl was specially instructed. If this aptitude and interest held throughout the junior labor period the individual was placed in the succeeding labor group where larger opportunities for advancement in this subject were open. Thus by a simple process of selection, without paper tests or artificial systems of measurement of capacity, at the age of twenty years most members of the community had received their "slant" for their life work. Lest they might make their choices too immaturely or become narrowed by overspecialization, they were put for brief periods after they were twenty in some quite different form of occupation, with the privilege of returning later to their original choices. The residuum of youth, for whom there seemed no special preferences, went on into the general labor units employed in coarser and more routine tasks. . . . The entomological and horticultural sections were very popular with the youngsters, and in them the most efficient directors were placed, because of the dual function they had to perform for the community. . . .

"What have you found?" Felix asked.

"A seven-year locust!" the director replied. "We thought we had finally gotten rid of these fellows. You know what a nuisance they once were? Many times they gave humanity a stiff fight for supremacy."

"Yes, the old Egyptians had a bad time with them. Even as late as the third decade of the twentieth Xian century they had to be fought with fire, and trenches were dug as in human warfare in ancient Palestine and on the plains of America. . . .

Once these pests were thought to be trials for mankind sent by a divine Providence!"

"Ancient humanity was always half-hearted in its struggle with insects and pests, accepting them fatalistically as necessary evils of nature. They knew as well as we do that nature was a nice balance; if one element in it got on the loose the entire economy would be upset. Mankind as it grew to civilization upset that natural balance by its methods of intensive cultivation and extermination of forests, offering great inducements to the inferior forms of life to multiply. More than once it was nip and tuck with civilized man against some pest a million times his inferior in size and intelligence. Yet they never went after these pests thoroughly, took charge of the insect and parasite world as a whole as we have done for the last three hundred years, with the result that mankind has now so firmly established human control that we need never fear the encroachments of inferior forms of life."

(These last words were addressed by the director to the boys and girls of the labor gang.) . . .

"Here! Run and get a jar for this fellow. We'll later on introduce him to one of his own pet parasites and then let him loose to communicate the parasite to all his relations as he will quickly enough. . . . Man having upset nature's precise balance in his efforts to improve his own condition must restore the balance in his own way through his intelligence. Otherwise we couldn't live except on the animal plane. And we can't exterminate all forms of life that at the moment seem noxious to us, because while harmful to us they might be useful indirectly in some way. So having taken on the supreme authority in our universe we butt in still farther into the lives of pests and parasites, cataloguing them and studying them, managing them as we do our own lives, so that they shall work for us instead of against us. Pests like this form of locust and certain

species of ants whose destructive powers are out of all proportion to any services they perform, we just promptly put out of existence by favoring their natural enemies. Nowadays we have the worst ones pretty well under control. But of course a few specimens survive and under favorable conditions return to prey on man and man's helpers. Like this boy!"

"Why not gas the fields and get rid of the vermin all at once?" one youngster asked.

"Too easy, my boy—and too wasteful! Most forms of what you call vermin have a use, for plants or for the soil. . . . Nobody has ever found a use for the greedy locust, nor for another small pest from which the ancient world suffered enormously,—the mosquito. If men had put half the energy into the extermination of mosquitoes that they did into killing each other, they might have lived happier lives. We settled the mosquito nuisance over the civilized portions of our world long ago although no doubt we shall have to fight it again in the forgotten continent if we want to remain there. Also we have gotten rid mostly of the innumerable kinds of flies that destroyed much food and were such deadly carriers of disease in the old world. . . . Has anyone of you ever seen a fly or a mosquito or a flea?"

"I have!" a little girl exclaimed proudly. "A mosquito in a jar in the museum,—a little bit of a thing with long legs like a spider."

"That was probably the dangerous anopheles mosquito that killed more people in different parts of the earth than all the wars of the old world—and that is saying a good deal! We keep a few specimens of these deadly little beasts to show you youngsters, but we keep them well locked up! . . . Did you also see in the next case the tsetse fly? That was Africa's deadly contribution to the pest world!" . . .

The old man passed on into the experimental plots filled with seedlings planted in vast profusion in order to obtain new varieties in the lottery of nature, where the youngest members of the labor bands clad only in loin cloths were running up and down the paths, glancing swiftly at the young plants, plucking a blossom here and there and carrying it to the director, who either rejected it or laid it aside for further examination in the divisional laboratory. Then they entered the hothouses and soil plots and the chemical alteration station where the Expert explained his present experiments in the creation of new varieties of vegetable life. . . .

This part of the grounds especially interested Felix. Here modern man was engaged in directing the irresponsible forces of nature into new channels valuable for him. This was what the ancient world had once dreamed of but never succeeded in achieving, a controlled evolution. Here mankind was determining with definite aims and a subtle skill acquired through generations of concentrated efforts his own future environment.

"Our real future lies here," the old man remarked to his companion, "rather than in any forgotten continent!" . . .

The youngsters flitted like bees through the flowering plots, in and out of the low thatched sheds where the more delicate operations were carried on. . . . Beyond lay the forestry section bounded by a thick growth of noble trees. Each section had its own laboratories and buildings to house the staffs engaged in the work. Society having dispensed with the waste of warfare and competition, and having definitely controlled the depredations of individual greed, had abundant resources with which to support adequately whatever was considered to be of benefit to humanity—for the determined amelioration of the human lot. . . . As the sun sank towards the distant horizon beyond the forest Felix bethought himself of his promise to

visit Veronica's college and summoning an airtaxi he was wafted over Khartoum to the airport from which departed the Abyssinian Express every afternoon an hour before sunset.

The airship followed for the first hour the winding course of the White Nile where in the old days of British domination small steamers had spent a whole month—and later their heavy airbirds the better part of a day. Observing the earth below through an arrangement of mirrors adjusted so that the air traveler might have a vertical rather than a horizontal picture of the land beneath him one saw a landscape that presented some remarkable changes from former times: instead of the desert that had once hemmed in Khartoum there were large forests interspersed with cotton and rice fields. Those sedgy swamps farther south where formerly a path for the river boats had to be cut through thick swamp grasses,—a home of wild animals and a hunting ground for adventurous Europeans,—were now drained and cultivated. . . . When the airship turned from the river southeastwards towards the mountains there were large industrial and agricultural settlements, so different in appearance and function from what was once understood by these terms that some explanation is necessary.

That concentration of industry in certain localities which used to be considered an economic necessity and a triumph of civilization was no longer either necessary or considered desirable in the modern world. Because of greatly accelerated and simplified methods of transport and manufacture modern men were not obliged to herd and hive as they once had done in industrial centers, surpassingly ugly and uncomfortable. The modern loose system of social and political organization did not encourage the herding habit. As the chief source of energy in the modern world was solar, there was no longer any economy in the concentration of industry into specialized spots

as once the making of steel was centered in Pittsburgh or Gary. Steel was no longer in large demand, many improved substances having been developed such as molded glass and alloys which could be made abundantly almost anywhere.

In the same way instead of having "shoe towns" and "hat towns" and "clock towns," etc.,—those melancholy examples of a tyrannous specialization where a lopsided existence was led by millions of human beings segregated as in prison from their fellows, social wens or goiters, the unit in the new world was not an industry but the community itself and its various social requirements,—in a word, life rather than the getting of a living. Thus no longer did the machine dominate, around which human lives piled and swarmed in unconsidered confusion and squalor, as at Fall River, Detroit, Brockton, Manchester, and thousands of other American "industrial centers." There was no longer the compulsion of mass production with its deadening slavery in which the human being stood at attention for hours at his post before the relentlessly moving platform, delivering his monotonously iterated blows towards the completion of the fabrics in process. Such an existence of slavery to machines would be thought by modern men and women as something worse than death!

Specialization in every department of life, once carried to such frantic lengths, no longer appealed to the human mind as either economical or necessary, even in the abstruse pursuits of pure science or the arts. Modern man aimed above all else to become a ripened human being with the command of developed faculties in many directions. His long term of education and social discipline prepared his body and mind for a variety of functions other than those of getting his living, which had become an incidental rather than a major preoccupation of the human race, like bathing or eating or exercising, something accomplished in a short time with a mere fraction

of the individual's energies. So the engineer might be not only a musician and a linguist but an expert gardener or something of a scientist and an administrator. (As for the poet, the new society had no special category of poets whose professional duty was to be exalted and expressive all the time. Everybody was supposed to practice the fine arts and to have an interest in creative expression. Poetry was life, not something printed in a book about living.)

The life of the individual being thus a diverse, many-sided affair, a related congeries of such lives was of itself many-sided, never compressed by the demands of one major activity. Every community as it grew became of itself increasingly complex and self-contained, an organism rather than a proliferation of single cells, as in the old world. Mechanized industry had become the cancerous tissue of that old order which threatened to choke all the finer, more human interests of the individual. Under the deadly monotony of those proliferating social tissues men and women took to stimulants, to drugs, to gadding forever about in aimless errands,—to anything that might distract the human being from the awfulness of consciousness, might deaden aching nerves. . . .

Almost everything used in the modern community, certainly all food products, were produced within a reasonable radius. For educational purposes, especially for youth, this organization of society on a horizontal rather than a vertical plane was of immense advantage. The young grew to maturity everywhere in a completely functioning organism, which was in miniature an adequate sample of the entire racial effort. The child no longer followed its parents' footsteps into mill or store or office according to class and educational opportunities, because no longer did the class or compartment ideal of human relationship prevail. Some aspect of every form of occupation the individual might test during the forty preparatory years of his life

without having removed more than an hour's journey from the place where he was born (the equivalent in old terms of four or five hundred miles).

A stranger coming to America during the vaunted Industrial Epoch would have at once been taken to one of the cities where the mass production of a single product and its allied industries was pursued, very likely to that monster of the type, the seat of the automobile industry. There was nothing similar in the new world to exhibit to the curious stranger. If he wished to learn exactly about the modern economy he would have to be born in a community like Khartoum, undergo his period of labor service in various units, live on in the same community, gradually coming into contact with its many varied activities. There would be no "typical" exhibits that he could glance at and write an article or a book about. (Consequently the scavenger occupation of journalism no longer existed.) Every social element dovetailed so perfectly into the next that a part could not be understood without taking into account the whole. Industry, for instance, had been so radically changed in all its aspects by removing the sole motive of profit-making that to the average mind of, let us say, the American of the late Xian era, the working of modern society would be unintelligible. Four-fifths (or more) of the futile products once foisted on buyers by insensate advertising were no longer in demand, and the remaining one-fifth of essential articles, thanks to the transformation of public taste and to improvements in materials and manufacture, would present a bewildering novelty to anyone educated in the old order. . . .

Shortly after leaving the White Nile the airship stopped in a large community on the edge of the mountainous country. The change in the landscape was so gradual from cotton and rice fields to orchards and field crops, all interspersed with hamlets where lived the cultivators, and by reaches of forested

lands that the town itself when one came to it was a surprise. The old contrast and antagonism between city and country had disappeared. The isolation and loneliness which had formerly characterized the one had vanished quite as completely as the overcrowding, the noise, and the stench of the other. Although this region was noted for the quantities of cotton cloth and various forms of leather work and pottery produced in it one would have had to hunt for the establishments where these industries were prosecuted. For the most part the buildings that housed the mechanical processes were low and small and detached like all modern building, dotted here and there close to the raw products used, and artfully concealed among plantations of trees. Thus industry was mingled with agriculture and emerged as one of the natural products of the earth itself, not set apart in hideous ugliness like something infernal.

The airship slowed down and came to a gentle pause in the heart of the town itself, a large green park with an artificial lake formed by water from the distant Nile. Around this open park were grouped the chief municipal buildings, whose center was the Amusement Hall, a large structure with porticoes and wings where different forms of plays and musical performances were given daily, and which included also the city museum and library (a repository for various records). Beyond this central hall were laboratories and the Public Hygiene office, always an important center. All the buildings were separated by flower beds and shrubs and flowering trees. . . . There were not many dwellings in this town, although it was the center for a considerable population, nearly one hundred thousand people. The new conception of the town was that it was for social purposes as much as for business, a center accessible to many who lived at some distance from it and who came there

not primarily to buy and sell, but for recreation and to see each other and exchange ideas.

When Felix stepped from the landing platform to stretch his legs during the quarter hour wait, there were many groups of inhabitants strolling about the central park or taking their evening meal at one of the booths beneath the trees or bathing, and already some had entered the Amusement Hall to glean the world news, which at sunset was sent to every community by wireless. The absence of parked motor-cars might have been noted, there no longer being any need to clutter up the main thoroughfares with such ugly and clumsy contraptions; also the absence of glaring lights from shop fronts and thronged shops themselves. One no longer came to town to buy because whatever one needed could be obtained locally more conveniently and burdening oneself with bulky parcels and many purchases was considered a waste of time. . . .

As the airship resumed its flight towards the high lands of Abyssinia the strains of the evening concert rose from below, a concert not delivered in a stuffy crowded hall but wafted through the twilight pervasively as though coming from many quarters at once. The symphony with which the concert opened accompanied Felix during the last thirty minutes of his rapid journey, floating downwards as it were from the stars that had begun to gleam in the velvet sky.

Chapter Five

MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

THE site of Mountain College on the high land of old Ethiopia had been chosen for its salubrity and its beauty as well as for convenience of access by the large African community that it served. Although the English word "college" has been used, the reader must not conceive it in the terms of an American female college, with trim ivy-covered brick or stone buildings, set in strips of greensward on a small campus, its nicely graveled walks crowded with young women in academic caps and gowns with rows of parked gas-engines outside the campus gates, etc. This modern college bore not the slightest resemblance to such a female kindergarten!

Mountain College (which served both sexes) with all its related activities covered an area of several square miles. There were many different groups of buildings, in the modern style, slight and self-effacing of poured glass, deeply arcaded and covered with flowering vines. These college halls were for actual use rather than monuments to philanthropic donors and for the most part constructed and ornamented by the students themselves, according to their own tastes and needs. These related groups of buildings provided thus actual working opportunities in every form of human activity that young men and women would engage in. Specifically there was a laundry and dye house, although the disagreeable necessity of washing dirty clothes had largely disappeared because most used garments were destroyed at once as unsanitary, a series

of kitchens, of machine and electrical shops for the construction and repair of such machines as were used. (One did not telephone to town for the plumber or automobile mechanic!) There was a printing establishment, which did engraving and illuminating mostly as the use of black print had gone by. Musical instruments were made as well as played just as one acquired the elements of chemistry and biology in garden and field rather than on laboratory benches.

If to the old-fashioned mind such a conception of education for adolescent youth seems to involve an impossible complexity and unwieldy administration, one must remember that many occupations and products had been discarded as useless and vitiating. Much time was also saved by the simplification of correspondence, the absence of all intricate devices of recording, accounting, and checking, paper work which in older days had consumed as much as a quarter of the human effort expended on any kind of undertaking! The saving of waste time on systems of discipline, the devising and enforcing of rules and penalties, amounted perhaps as much as a half day's working time each week for every individual in the college community. Self-government being the rule everywhere, no exceptional privilege was accorded youths at college; they were supposed to look after themselves and if any members showed a disposition to ignore the customs of the community they were quickly sent back to their homes.

Boys and girls slept in different quarters of the large community, but otherwise they mingled with complete freedom in work and play. The sex tabu between those still unsterilized or unmated was ordinarily strong enough to prevent those unhealthy sensualities which too often had disgraced old world educational institutions; transgressions of this fundamental social law were never condoned. The offender was immediately sterilized, no matter what his or her record might be,

and sent off to some remote labor unit. Thanks to the modern hygiene of the body and an active community life youth was perhaps less troubled by its sexual impulses than under less healthy conditions. At any rate it was not considered decent to indulge this appetite prematurely and promiscuously. The "necking" girl or "hugging" boy would have been considered a trifle ridiculous as well as degenerate. . . .

A stranger, familiar with old world colleges in either Europe or America, would hardly recognize where he was if he had landed at the far end of Mountain College in Abyssinia and wandered slowly upwards to the hill-crowned center of the community. The scale and magnificence of the scene would have made him breathless,—a succession of broad grassy savannas or meadows dotted with groves of ancient trees, rimmed along the upper horizon by snow-capped mountains. Here and there clusters of buildings of opaque colored glass nestled among the trees or were detached in acres of varicolored flower plantings, so arranged as to offer from a distance the effect of waves of color undulating across the scene, like ripe grain billowing in a brisk wind. . . . The air saturated with the warmth of the equatorial sun was yet lively and fresh because of the elevation of eight thousand feet above sea level and the nearness to snow mountain peaks. On the lower levels of the savannas were many lakes, large and small, connected by winding canals whose banks were lined with colored lilies. As one progressed to the higher levels the sense of bewilderment would grow; at one moment the panorama seemed something like the "landscaped suburb" of an American city on a grandiose scale, at another like a huge stock farm of an American millionaire, again it was reminiscent of a "new era" electrical factory or research foundation. There was, however, no Main Street, no rows of parked gas-cars—the small balloon-shaped airtaxis used for all local transport when not in use

were deflated and rolled up into unobtrusive umbrella-shaped parcels—no soda or gas or fried food stands, etc., etc. There were benches under the trees, grass walks along the canals, fountains and garden courts for quiet contemplation or eating one's food, tiny waterfalls and here and there in the groves out-of-door auditoriums. As a whole it was not unlike Genji's "New Palace," in the old Japanese novel.

A streak of gold on the low western horizon was answered by a suffused glow on the eastern mountain tips when Felix stepped from the airliner on the grassy airport of Mountain College. The swift twilight of the tropics had already descended duskily upon the groves and savannas of the lower levels, setting into high relief the great hall on the hill which dominated the whole. . . . The airport was filled with strange figures and shapes moving in and out of the surrounding groves apparently accidentally, but massing into design at the center. Many of these were animal shapes, huge creatures of prehistoric bulk, and with them smaller more modern animals, the elephant, the rhinoceros, the lion and panther and antelope, weaving in and out, uttering fierce cries, while on the branches of the ancient liveoaks chattered tribes of monkeys and flame-colored birds screeched. . . .

At first the old man was startled. It seemed as though instead of descending on the peaceful savanna of Mountain College he had been dropped into the jungle of old Africa with all its wild and furtive animal life—which was precisely the effect desired. While he stood bewildered staring at the milling throng of beasts, deafened by the raucous sounds they emitted, half believing in the animated struggles taking place among them, a laughing voice greeted him from a group of men and women partly concealed in a thicket of tall grasses. They were naked except for a breech cloth of woven grass and

their bodies stained to an inky blackness; they approached the old man in a furtive crouching posture not unlike that of the apes that were running behind them.

"Welcome to Africa!" one of the group called, in Veronica's voice. Detaching herself from the others she put her hand on his arm and drew him with her into the thick of the press of men and animals. "This is the pageant we have been preparing for a year or more to celebrate your visit. . . . This lower level is given over to primeval swamp and jungle. . . . Haven't they done it well? Those are all human monkeys and apes, even the smallest ones, and that huge slimy creature heaving himself up out of the lake is a knot of young men. Come! We'll go on to the next level where you will see the first efforts of our ancestors to organize their lives."

Felix immediately grasped the plot and laughingly followed his guide, who was accompanied by a special group of young girls, evidently the new acquisitions from distant Asia, each representing a primitive type of her own people, Malay, Javanese, Ceylonese, Burmese. Slowly they made their way through the jungle paths of the lower savanna which had been converted into a very substantial lair of wild life, at times stopped by the bolder animals, hustled by the big apes, until they reached the next level where in caves and hollow trees were living many types of prehistoric Africans, strange figures, partly animal. Here and there gleamed a fire by the light of which squatted apelike figures, working with crude tools in wood and stone. At one narrow pass they stopped to look at the pictures chiseled in the stone cliffs, being illuminated in crude colors by these primitive artists. Into these human haunts burst elephants and lions, which were hunted and killed by savage men, or in their turn killed and eaten, while the surrounding forest was filled with discordant cries.

The old man, immensely diverted, examined every skillful display and commented appreciatively,—

“Very good, very good! They’ve got the right impression,—fear and beastly struggle. That was what man came from. . . . No wonder it has taken him all these millions of years to rid himself of his inheritance, and to tame such a disorderly environment.”

As if to give emphasis to his thought a band of huge apelike men with bandy legs and bent heads rushed upon the group of girls about Veronica and bore them off into the deep thickets, with wild cries of desire and shrieks of terror from their captives.

“That is a bit too realistic,” Felix murmured to Veronica; but the latter smiled,—“They know how to take care of themselves—don’t fear! It has all been rehearsed many times in anticipation of your coming. . . . Pursued and pursuers will glide through the forest to the upper levels and reappear later in their own likenesses. . . . See that old-time dinner!”

A family group was squatting outside one of the caves intent on devouring an antelope, which dripping with blood had been stretched on the earth in their midst. Men and women seized the still warm animal and greedily dismembered it, while others looked on enviously. The meal ended in a fight. Farther on a small child was being devoured, and in a thicket nearby an old woman was dying like an animal, unnoticed by the feasters nearby. . . .

Already from the next level sounded the deep boom of drums, coming from distant points.

“This is the tribal age,” Veronica explained, “some half million years nearer us, but still remote!”

As they proceeded upwards through glades and thickets the drums became more insistent and as it was now dark the effect of nameless fear, the thrill of terror, was accentuated. On this

higher level which was much more spacious than those below were represented different tribal collections of primitive Africans, from dwarfs to tall Abyssinians,—cannibals, head hunters, clay eaters, dark figures with huge lip and nose rings and curious headdresses. These various groups interested Felix more than the denizens of the swamp and the jungle below; he insisted upon viewing each settlement, commenting on the accuracy with which the different tribes were pictured with their customs and their environments, all of which were known to him, from the steamy forests of the interior rivers to the desert settlements of the northern coast, and the mountain plateaus.

“Such infinite trouble they have taken with it all,” he remarked appreciatively to his companion.

“Yes, they have worked hard,” she said, “and they have learned a great deal. But there is more ahead!”

On the next higher level had been erected an exact reproduction of the mighty temple of Karnak, with its canalized approach from the Nile and in the distance the placid river itself. This great religious enclosure symbolized the early civilization of Africa, and at a short distance from the temple rose the walls of Tell-el-Amarna, Tutankhamen’s city, where the evening repast was served to Felix and his companion in the form of a banquet of the Pharaohs, at which hundreds of young men and women appeared in various rôles. While the banquet was in progress a picture was presented of a mighty pyramid with the ceremony of the burial of a dead Pharaoh, and as this faded from view another picture of the world beyond reality furnished with all the characteristic objects with which the ancient Egyptians materialized the life hereafter. On the great river which seemingly flowed past the banqueters floated the ship of the dead, above which soared symbolic

hawks cutting the night air, faintly illuminated, with their monumental wings. . . .

“And now for the final acts,” Veronica said, as they rose from the banquet and made their way upwards to the great central hall of the college, which crowned the height. This large building with extensive colonnades all in pure white and a cobalt-blue roof from which depended luxuriant vines, was softly illuminated by a process of ground lighting simulating moonlight. The spectators among whom were many of those who had taken part in the preceding divisions of the pageant seated themselves on the large terrace enclosed between the two wings of the main building. In the center spurted a magnificent jet of water from a marble fountain, which fell in cooling sheets of spray of many tones and colors as the illumination of the pictures within the hall changed. . . .

“Now,” explained Veronica, “we shall have some scenes from the next chapter of Africa’s story,—the invasion of the white people. The story is too long to be presented in detail, but the episodes chosen are significant and moving.”

Before their eyes the familiar outlines of the great hall began to fade as under an enveloping mist and in place of the arcades and porticoes and terraced floors of the building appeared the houses and public buildings of ancient Carthage peopled by restless throngs of citizens and soldiers. Many devices were employed to give reality to the living picture. The pageant was a popular form of entertainment and in it there had been combined many elements of various arts, the opera, the stage, the motion picture, which had been developed far beyond the crude unrealistic photography of previous times, by the use of color and waves of light that simulated actual bodies in three dimensions, perfected sound reproduction, and a kind of painting on cloud that permitted vast scenes to be rendered,

blending and emerging and altering like a mountain landscape in storm. Thus the coming of the Romans, their landing and assault of the African city, the ensuing carnage were enacted rapidly, yet distinctly, while a form of chant explained the scene broken in different places by the more dramatic dialogue of individual actors.

"I never saw a better pageant," the old man murmured, enthralled by the perfected union of all pictorial and dramatic methods. "One cannot tell what is human mimicry and what is mere illusion, what is acting and what is pure picture, it all blends so perfectly. It is like living another life, much condensed in space and time, yet quite as vivid as reality. What a magnificent way of presenting history!"

The interlude before the next large scene was filled with floating picture clouds describing the encroachments of Europeans on the seacoast, their settlements and the enslavement of the natives. After these had faded like summer clouds the spectator was transported to the center of Africa with its wild tribes of black men, beasts and jungles, into which came the Missionary, the Hunter, and the Trader, the last and most deadly enemy sent from the North. Then was presented the destruction of the simple primitive order of old Africa, of wild beast and wild men, and the substitution of the white man's order, the rule of firearms and strong drink and gold.

Next came the Slaver, using the native chief to decoy and force his tribesmen into the net of captivity, the stream of living bodies flowing towards the coast and the slavers' settlements and the trim sailing ships lying at anchor nearby. From the slave settlements the pictures shifted to different parts of the world into which the children of Africa had been carried and sold into captivity, first of all North America. (Here in mockery was interpolated a little scene among the pious God-fearing Puritans of New England illustrating the profitable re-

sults of the African trade, in quiet dignified households of Salem and Boston and Portsmouth, showing the solid fortunes of respectable families founded on slavery.) Also scenes in England and later in Belgium. There followed scenes of Emancipation of the Black Man, with the ironic implication that the white man had found it less expensive to make his slave free, in name, than to keep him in bondage as a beast of burden. Old Felix's lips curled with amusement at these comic touches, which revealed man's inveterate hypocrisy when spurred by profit.

"We shall find that this habit was still in force in old New York I have no doubt," he muttered. . . .

After an interlude filled with cloud paintings of the life of these stolen children of Africa in different parts of the old world, ending with a gruesome representation of a negro lynching in Alabama and a scene from a Georgia chain gang, 1932, the stage was set for old Khartoum at the time of Gordon's service, the revolt of the Mahdi, the devious devices of the English when they laid their hands on this vast slice of Africa, with the same hypocritical camouflage of religion and progress to cover the stealthy acquisitions of private greed. (One little episode which greatly diverted the old man was a scene in which Gordon met the English statesman Gladstone, "two religious rogues," as Felix muttered to himself.) The crowning episode of this picture was the appearance of Kitchener and the rape of the false prophet's body. At the sight of the big blond soldier wiping his thick mustache after a long draught of English ale the old man remarked to his companion, "There's your perfect Englishman! See how stupid he is behind all his gold lace and spurs! . . . And he was the instrument that for three centuries carried the British form of slavery into every quarter of the globe. . . . Kitchener himself went down in the North Sea when on his way to

Russia with the mission of forcing the same British ideal on that wretched land. He did not live to see the Empire founder, the crumbling of that British rule based on a sense of British superiority to the alien races conquered by them, the end of the gospel with profit! . . . Well, they were a fine lot of rascals too!"

Next came the conquest of South Africa and the rapid "colonization" and "partition" of the continent, the spotted lines of dependencies, colonies, "free states,"—the Kaffirs, Rhodes and his shoddy imperialism, English schoolboys, Kruger, correctly dressed German lieutenants, Oxford-bred administrators, Belgian slave drivers, all gnawing like so many mice around the edges of the continent while the dark interior remained savage, mysterious, impenetrable—Africa itself.

"The rape of a continent!" the old man murmured somberly.

Gold, ivory, slaves, cocoa, oil, then copper and more gold, cotton, these were the lures to the white men, engaged in gutting a continent to satisfy their crude lusts. There came the inevitable struggle among themselves for domination, first stealthy, indirect, treacherous, then more open and threatening, until at last there flamed up the great conflagration of the so-called World War, many of whose seeds had been sown in the Dark Continent. Again the children of Africa were carried away from their mother land in virtual slavery to fight in an unknown country for an unknown cause, to die for the preservation of the civilization that had done its utmost to destroy them and their land.

And at a long last of violence, crime, rapine, lust rose the gilt salons of that Parisian palace where the final partition of Africa was carried out. One saw the crowded tables, the worn faces of the "peacemakers," the come and go of secretaries and assistants, all the flutter and fribble of "solemn covenants openly arrived at,"—mean bargains made secretly in hotel bed-

rooms now inscribed pompously for the world to behold; "Mandates" which were merely verbal disguises for possession. And thus a New Map of Africa was created and flashed before the eyes of the audience, wherein were presented in colors the pilferings of the White Race in the home of the Black Men,—France, red-brown lying across the great desert of Sahara, with nearly a third of the continent in her control, England with another quarter of "mandates" once German colonies, her payment for defending the cause of civilization (in Europe), and after these two a few scattering bits still unclaimed among them the pitiful Republic of Liberia, an amorphous scandalous gesture of the great western Republic (that had done more to devour the African and reduce him to wretchedness than all other nations). . . .

The old man moved restlessly, muttering to himself,—

"The Ice Age came none too soon. . . . Such hypocritical rats as they were, these intrepid colonizers and exploiters and guardians of backward races!"

"Stay!" Veronica urged gently. "There is one more picture which you may like better."

After the Partition of a Continent there was a quarter hour's intermission during which a strange form of music, a mingling of distant barbaric melodies, of drum beatings and jungle chants all woven thematically in a tragic thread, filled the air, rising here and dying away to reappear on an altered scale from another corner of the heavens. The amphitheater was in complete darkness, illumined by the brilliant heavens filled with points of distant light. . . . Gradually the differing strains of song and chant gathered themselves up in a great crescendo, in which the wailing voices, the songs of the defeated, gave way before a magnificent chorus of triumph in which the words of a cantata, "My Africa," composed for this occasion, were sung by a thousand voices.

During this final chant a series of cloud paintings drifted across the stage presenting the physical outlines of the New Africa, so much altered from the old, no longer the immense sandy Sahara, no longer the steaming jungles of the Equator, the blazing monotony of the coast settlements. Thanks to intelligent efforts over centuries the topography of the continent had been remade. No longer was it the fearful home of strange wild animals, prey for hunters, slavers, cameras, and sportsmen seeking its depths for new thrills. And no longer were its peoples the accepted inferiors of the entire world, the slaves, the symbol of human bondage and degradation. Instead handsome, vigorous men and women of every shade of color, of every racial character thronged the stage. Gradually pictures had given place to actuality: these were all the youths that had taken part in the huge pageant, now at the end appearing in their own shape, chanting as wave upon wave they moved forward into the foreterrace, "My Africa, oh, my Africa! . . . Mother of man . . . Dark womb of the human race . . . My Africa, my Africa, the first and the last, the beginning and the end!"

"That," said Veronica, "is the end! It was worth waiting for, was it not?"

The old man was too much moved to speak. His lips murmured silently the words of the chant, "My Africa, my Africa!" while he listened to the fading volume of song that came up now from below as the troops of actors in the long pageant passed downwards to their various quarters.

"I wish old Kitchener might have seen that!" Felix remarked with a long sigh as the night became silent and the white outline of the amusement hall empty now of human figures confronted them. . . . "But I don't suppose he would have taken in its meaning—the English of that type were so dense. . . . Rhodes, cheap as he was, might have understood

dimly what it was all about. He would have tried to annex our New Africa to rehabilitate his little island home, no doubt. . . . Livingstone would have understood too. But not Gordon—he would have been looking everywhere for his cruel God and not finding him would have raised a row!”

When they had entered Veronica’s personal quarters in a distant wing of the central hall the old man stepped to the open loggia which faced westwards away from the mountains and stood there in reverie for some time, gazing out upon the descending levels of ground to the distant valley of the White Nile, which shimmered vaguely under the soft moonlight. All that had been so animated, so filled with moving figures of men and animals, was now still and empty. Africa whose long story had been retold there during the evening hours with every form of art and technique known to modern man had now returned to herself, to a brooding solitude. Vast, dark, mysterious. . . . Veronica came and stood at his side.

“How lovely!” she murmured, “and how peaceful now!”

“It was a great story splendidly told and for me, who am about to leave for that old New World where the children of Africa suffered so horribly, a great inspiration! . . . As I passed through the different levels where were shown the trials and sufferings of this portion of the globe I realized the meaning of our Expedition more clearly than ever before. . . . Africa, the mother of the human race, is now sending out her children, not in noisome slave ships to labor in bondage for the evil desires of alien peoples, but as conquerors of life, in the true sense to discover, to investigate, to explore and—who knows?—perhaps to lay the foundations of this our new world in that forgotten continent which for so many centuries has slept beneath the Ice Cap, to renew there the story of humanity so badly begun after the voyage of Columbus

and the plunderings of his contemporaries. Now I shall depart on that final journey of my long life with a deeper understanding of all that it means. I shall retrace the voyage of those frail sea vessels with other purposes than to discover strange lands and snatch from them gold and spices for my European master and his subjects. Africa, freed from its long bondage, is sending through me the spirit of the new world to other lands. . . .

“Think, my dear, what that means! Africa, the despised and the enslaved, her land the loot of lustful peoples, robbed of her gold and ivory and of her youth, despoiled for centuries upon centuries, Africa the sporting ground for predatory races—ah, that scene at Versailles where the final partition of Africa was consummated without the intervention of a single African!—now presents the world with a new civilization, a new purpose! The black man once considered the meanest of all the earth’s children, his color deemed the badge of his inferiority, something halfway between animal and man, the burden-bearer, the slave, the buffoon of the nations, is now triumphant, the leader of mankind in the new organization of life. If it had not been for us, descendants in good part of the humble black men, there would be no Expedition to the forgotten continent. It is Africa that has led humanity upwards from the depths into which it had sunk when overwhelmed by the Ice Cap, by a new path to a new conception of human existence.”

The old man walked alertly back and forth upon the loggia, his eyes flashing, pointing rapidly with his arms to the distant moonlighted earth beneath them as if addressing it, invoking it personally.

“For there was something in that despised black man that no other members of the human race possessed, some perception of deeper truth than any other had. Laughter and tears

and love they had, the power of endurance! They loved their fellowmen, they loved life. And they alone could conceive of life as a whole, not this one's selfish interest, not this nation's right to rule, but the good of all, the whole apart from the individual, the individual merged and controlled by his sense of wholeness. . . . Those greedy northern races prated all their days about their 'individuality,' their 'rights'—as if the single being had of itself any rights, even the right to die or breed! As if the individual could exist apart from the whole! . . . They were so fearful of destroying 'individuality,' the precious right of self-expression, self-determination, which ignored the rights of all others. As if anything worth having could be taken from the individual, as if by himself he could attain anything desirable. Whatever in him is inviolable can never be taken from him: it lies within, inseparable, and all else belongs to others!

"That is the lesson the humble African has taught the suffering world, and it is through that knowledge he has been able to build our new society, whose energies freed from bondage to selfish selves, from killing others or protecting himself from being killed, have been spent in fulfilling his love of life. At last the despised African has made a *happy* world—one with the fewest shackles, the least governmental guidance and interference ever known. . . . May we keep steadily on our path, not tempted back into the licenses and the savageries from which we have with so much effort escaped! . . . That is what your pageant means to me, my dear," the old man concluded with a light laugh at his own vehemence. . . .

Veronica, who had been listening to his fiery outburst with a detached interest, thinking that it was the alien Greek blood in him that thus sorted out reasons from their remote causes, and that it was just this strain of the analytical philosopher and historian derived from his Greek ancestor united with the

warm sympathies and emotional enthusiasms of his African blood that had made him inevitably the acknowledged leader of the world. And the same blend of precious qualities had years ago in the maturity of her younger womanhood won her loyal devotion and complete love.

For they had been lovers all the later years of their busy lives, each succeeding year making the attachment stronger, the bonds more complexly woven. They had come to each other when neither had the possibility of begetting children and when physical amorousness had already somewhat waned, although never wholly absent in the subtle complex of their union. Never had the touch of their flesh failed to awaken response which might often be mental rather than physical. Never had the awareness of each for the other grown less. Often apart, each working separately, both felt like the pull of gravity the desire to be together. Neither ever dreamed of "changing" the other, of forcing the other to his or her likeness or course of action because both enjoyed the marked contrasts that their natures—and different ages—offered. . . . So whenever their union was noticed by their associates it was spoken of as the perfect example of what a man could be to a woman and a woman to a mature man.

And it was notable in their world that love was not considered a matter for green youth or amorous middle age, a romantic desire to be laughed at as age approached. Love, it was deemed, was the finest flower that life offered, and as age advanced and the impulse was removed from mere physical appeal to other emotional and mental centers love became finer, rarer, but no less moving and essential. So when an old man like the Greek Felix said, as he often did to Veronica,—“I shall love you until the last breath leaves my body,” there was thought to be nothing either absurd or fustian in the

words, merely the happy expression of a perfect relationship. . . .

As it has been shown elsewhere, the trammels that had once thwarted all sex expression having been wholly cut so that each individual could shape his love life as seemed best to him or her, the physical bases of the relation of the sexes had largely lost any social significance. The individual was left free to build what he or she could on these bases common to all humanity. The old Greek and the middle-aged Veronica had built deep and firm; as they lay side by side on the couch in the loggia that night tranquilly communing through their relaxed bodies under the starlight, both floating upwards into the heavens of speculation and reverie, they renewed the eternal youth that each possessed within. . . .

Before sinking finally into sleep Veronica murmured,—
“You will stay tomorrow to see my girls? . . . Some of the new ones are dears, so tiny and so dainty. They are having a great success with our African boys and will all be snatched up soon. . . . I think I’ll follow you to the New World some day and bring them out with me. Your young men will be delighted too.”

“You know our decision, Veronica, not to take women on the Expedition, at least at first because of the distraction and—”

“Nonsense, Felix! That sounds just like the old stuffy world you are going to excavate. . . . I shall bring *all* my young women, all the best-looking ones that is.”

Chapter Six

THE VOYAGE

WHEN Felix arrived at the airport before dawn of the summer day chosen by him for a new voyage of discovery into the western hemisphere, the special airship which was to convey him and his party was in readiness, gently undulating in the morning air between the tall pillars that confined it as in a dock.

The long slim rounded body of the airship was sheathed in a thin outer skin of a newly developed metal which was stronger than any steel hitherto made, yet as flexible and transparent as glass. Touched by the first beams of the approaching sun the huge flying fish glowed iridescently, sparks of gold playing along its long flanks. Softly, smoothly it moved out between the confining pillars and rose majestically into the heavens, noiselessly, then pointing somewhat north of west towards what formerly had been the vast desert of Sahara gathered speed and shot away in exact time with the moving earth.

Beneath the airship lay no longer those endless reaches of ridged sand where countless caravans had once been engulfed in sand storms. Instead there was a pleasantly varied landscape of undulating plains broken by occasional forests, near Khartoum, until the inland sea was reached which now covered all the interior of the ancient desert. This remarkable change in the topography of northern Africa, as well as its improved climate, had been brought about by the gradual rise of the

sea level since the last glacial period permitting (with the assistance of human engineering) the flooding of the more depressed areas of the old desert, as had sometimes been idly suggested in ancient times, although never seriously attempted.

The creation of such a vast inland sea had affected the rainfall of this formerly arid region and made possible the plantation of forests and the cultivation of the more elevated portions of the Sahara, and this reclamation of the desert had in its turn reacted beneficially upon the climate of the entire northern half of Africa, tempering its tropical heat, making it possible to reclaim the interior jungles and rendering what had once been known as the "dark continent," home of black slaves and wandering Arab tribes, the most fertile and progressive country of the new world, the center of modern civilization.

Unfortunately the same cause which had redeemed Africa had buried all northern Europe under immense glaciers whose fields extended still as far south as the Pyrenees and the Alps. Even Italy, the center of earlier civilization (which thanks to the raising of the floor of the eastern Mediterranean had resumed its former connection with Sicily, Greece, and Asia Minor), was still too cold and bleak for intensive habitation, much like Scotland in older times. As for France and England, which for a brief thousand years had lorded it over the rest of the globe, they were now in the condition of an Iceland or a Greenland, visited occasionally by modern men in pursuit of ancient relics of their former civilizations. It was considered doubtful if these lands once so populous and so industrialized would ever within calculable ages again become fit for human habitation—unless some way could be discovered by modern ingenuity of deflecting the tropical currents of the sea in such manner that they might wash their icy shores. . . .

The interior of the long slim airship was divided into various suites and compartments on three different levels which communicated by ramps. The general impression was of light and space. In contrast with those gigantic floating hotels in which rich persons of the Xian era delighted to transport themselves across oceans, the modern airliner was barely furnished with light articles that could be easily detached from place and pushed into floor or walls. While the ideal of the old world had been clutter, an infinite and benumbing variety of things, the aim of the new culture was space, airiness, simplicity.

As voyages required only a number of daylight hours—the globe could be circled in a single day—a great mass of things once deemed essential for the comfort of the traveler could be dispensed with. (Yet with the progressive shortening of sea journeys from the first voyage of Columbus to the days of the *Europa* and the *Bremen* the tendency had been formerly to increase the clutter of non-essentials rather than to reduce it!)

Here and there along the sides of the airship were special compartments for communications, one of which Felix immediately entered so that he might be put in touch with the important events of the day. Here on a small metal mirror a succession of clearly etched pictures in color exhibited those occurrences in distant places which the beholder was interested in, while from the walls in natural tones of the human voice emerged a succinct comment, a summary of the day's news from all parts of the civilized world, such as was prepared and delivered to every modern community. This spoken résumé of world news would have occupied less than a column of the ancient "newspaper," and the entire process of gleaning the daily news of the world took less than five minutes, so much was saved by the omission of mere gossip, personalities, and other trivial space-filling and time-consuming devices of

ancient journalism. Yet much care was taken in the preparation of these news summaries, and it was considered of the highest importance that they should be distributed throughout the world and brought to the attention of every human being so that society as a whole might have within its consciousness the essential facts of contemporary life. Thus provincialism, local ignorances, and prejudices could be averted. . . .

Felix made a few notes as he listened, then turning to a raised panel in the wall spoke to one of his secretaries in Khartoum, asking for a quotation from an ancient history of the United States, which in a few minutes would be read to him.

After sipping a cup of fruit juice and wine he went up one of the gentle ramps to the control deck above. This was almost as bare of furniture as the living decks below. The airliner's commander, a tall aquiline-featured young man of forty odd, was pacing the foredeck. An ingenious contrivance of mirrors displayed on the walls of the room the panorama of earth and sky through which the liner was swiftly passing and into which it would presently advance.

The commander on Felix's request opened a slide in the side of the vessel and the two stepped into a small transparent chamber from which they could look directly down on the inland sea over which a brisk wind was beating up a lively chop. The ship moved with a slight undulation through the air at the even pace of the earth's motion, its motors scarcely audible. They neared Morocco, and as they were passing above the Kybele mountains Felix requested that the ship be dropped a couple of thousand feet so that he might observe more closely the famous Pillars of Hercules through which their course lay out into the open Atlantic. Due to the rise in the sea level these mountain peaks appeared less lofty than they had to the ancient poets, less awe inspiring than when Hercules was

fabled to have put himself on their summits and sustained the heavens while the giant went in search of the golden apples. Felix remarking this, the commander smiled and observed,—

“We have changed a thing or two since Hercules’ day. I fancy that Columbus himself would have had a heart attack if he had looked up and seen us over his head.”

“I don’t know about that. He lived in the last age of romance, when the human imagination worked actively on the wonders presented to it, phenomena about which they knew too little to be critical. Columbus’ *Journal* relates marvels which he found in his New World scarcely less incredible than our airship would have seemed to him. He lived, fortunately for him, in a believing age.”

“True! . . . But he might have envied us our speed. He was ninety-odd days floating about below, while we shall pick up his Cat Island in the Bahamas at two-twenty this afternoon.”

“How long will it take to make the site of old New York from that point?”

“If we have luck, no strong head winds and clear atmosphere for heat transmission, we should be off old Sandy Hook by seven or eight in the evening. . . . As soon as we leave the equatorial belt and turn due north we lose the direct pull and must depend on indirect transmission—may have to use our auxiliaries if we haven’t stored enough energy. I suppose up north we shall have to depend a good deal on the auxiliaries if you propose to cruise around much, and so I have ordered fresh batteries and condensers to be sent out regularly.”

Felix nodded.

“Nothing like this speed and steady motion was ever known before in the entire history of navigation!” the young commander exclaimed enthusiastically as he listened to the low

whine of the air passing over the ship's gleaming sides. "Since we discovered the secret of direct radial transmission we have been able to hitch our airships to the sun, so to speak. We have mastered the secret of movement. . . . Some day we shall learn how to apply the same force in transverse directions and can dispense altogether with the nuisance of auxiliaries!"

"To think that when old New York was at the zenith of its fame, they depended largely for transportation on the explosion of gases or electric power transmitted great distances by wires . . . and poor old Columbus had to depend solely on the whims of the winds. . . . The earth do move, as that old Italian said under his breath when the authorities of the church were torturing him for the heresy of independent thinking. We at last have utilized that motion to move ourselves where we want to go. The earth do move! Strange how in those old times the conservative and ignorant majority was forever torturing anybody who tried to use his intelligence. The majority was always afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Of themselves I suppose; afraid of their God, of what might happen to them if freedom were a bit enlarged; afraid, in short, of life! . . . So we are hitched in a very real sense to the sun in the heavens as Phaëthon was hitched in the old fable. . . . Singular how many of those ancient myths contained a grain of truth, of prophecy of things to come! That little active-minded Mediterranean people from which I have the good luck to be in part descended got nearer to the heart of things than the more enlightened peoples of the Xian era two thousand years later, who were so proud of their achievements in science and technology. Their world was almost completely lacking in imagination, in the precious human power of creating the new out of the old by a mysterious re-assembly of its elements. . . . I am glad that I did not live

in that cocksure twentieth Xian century, which proved so helpless before the dilemmas that they had made themselves. If I were not to live today, I had rather have been born among the old Greeks, who used their imaginations."

The young commander smiled indulgently at the old man's prejudice in favor of his remote Greek ancestors and remarked,—

"This is a pretty good kind of world of ours, and we are making it better all the time. . . . I hope we shall get a look at those new breakwaters they are creating off the Florida coast to turn the warm currents from the tropics nearer in-shore. That was a happy idea, to melt off the remains of the Ice Cap by means of tropical currents! . . . Would you like to see how we operate the ship? She's a perfect witch!"

He moved to a long table on which were raised banks of buttons like those on the console of an organ. By touching these buttons here and there he altered the movement of the giant airliner, making it dip or rise or wheel in vast circles without however disturbing the equilibrium of its decks, which were so nicely hung within the skin of the ship and balanced by counterweights that they kept a level pitch no matter what the ship's angle might be.

"No more of that disease of the sea," Felix observed, "which was almost universal when one's insides were being perpetually tossed up and down. . . . Old Columbus must have had a tough time of it! Three months or more of tumbling about on the surface of that!"

He pointed down at the sea below them, which had been increasingly ruffled by a strong wind from the southwest that seemed to brush the giant airliner along before it like a feather in front of a blow pipe. They were now so near the surface of the ocean that they could hear faintly the sound of the

waves as they broke into spume in their race after each other. . . .

"Put her up again, Commander!" Felix advised. "It is not necessary for us to retrace Columbus's exact footsteps, even if we could. . . . They are giving below some sort of panorama of this part of the world as it appeared to those first voyagers from Europe. It must be interesting. Won't you join us?"

The Commander touched a button on his control board, and presently an assistant appeared and took over the ship, which was now mounting almost vertically into the upper air.

"Keep her about ten thousand as long as it is clear," the Commander ordered as he followed the old Greek down the ramp to the deck below.

There in the large light salon were gathered the assistants Felix had selected to accompany him to the site of the excavations. A carefully chosen group of men representing the sciences and technologies necessary for the exploration of the old New World,—hydraulic, civil, and mining engineers, agronomists, architects, archæologists, ethnologists, climatologists and anthropologists. They all wore a sort of working uniform made of a light and flexible leather substance, which gave them the appearance of an army staff. . . . Along the further wall of the salon was passing a series of colored pictures, beginning with the three caravels in which Columbus and his company of adventurers had set forth in search of the East Indies. They were shown bobbing up and down on the swells of the sea or drifting idly in a calm, with their high prows and lofty poops crowded with figures of men dressed in strange costumes. Presently the little ships lay becalmed in fields of floating seaweed while the sailors hung listlessly over their sides, gazing despairingly at the empty expanse of the sea. At last came

the first land birds, which quickened the company of adventurers into animation, and the first sight of land, the low-lying sandy reach of a Bahama reef, on that autumn morning of 1492. . . .

Next were presented scenes from the different islands visited by Columbus on his various voyages, with their volcanic mountains, their transparent colored seawater, tropical vegetation, and the simple habitations of the natives. These, Arawaks and Caribs, were shown in groups shyly hiding from the strange visitors from another world. Handsome bronzed men and women, quite naked, with long black hair, gentle and yet proud. There followed the pictured story of the first meetings of Columbus and his followers with the island natives, the childlike curiosity of these, their hospitalities broken by the invaders' two dominating lusts,—for gold and women. These were shortly followed by a third obsession hardly less repugnant to the aborigines, the Spaniards' will to "convert" the "savages" to the Holy Faith and the brutal methods taken to instill belief in the new gods among the aborigines.

Following the swift succession of pictures one could gather the entire story of the discovery of the New World,—the simple delusion of the Spanish adventurers who thought crudely in terms of their own expectations that they had reached the treasure house of the East Indies and the painful disillusion of the peaceable inhabitants whose tropical paradise was being invaded. From scene to scene the progress of this pitiful drama could be inferred in the rapid transformation of the Indians' curiosity and good will into fear, dislike, hostility.

"A remarkable allegory of civilization in the old manner," Felix observed dryly to the Commander. "A band of cut-throats and the refuse of society lured on by the hope of loot invade the peaceful homes of a simple people, seeking gold and women, offering in exchange the blessings of their religion,

which are not appreciated by the ignorant natives. The wanton cruelty and brutality of the Christian invaders are at variance with the faith they endeavor to teach at the point of their swords. Small wonder that the natives prefer their own idols."

At the moment there was being displayed a scene on the shores of magnificent Samaná Bay on the east coast of Santo Domingo, called the Bay of the Arrows because here a band of island natives goaded at last to desperation by the cruel strangers had attacked them and driven them back to their ships with a cloud of feathered arrows that penetrated even the light armor worn by the white men.

"The first armed conflict between members of the great Aryan race and the North American Indian," explained the ethnologist who was interpreting the pictures with occasional comments. "It is interesting to recall that this magnificent bay was the object of diplomatic chicane several centuries later when the government of the United States tried to snatch it from the degenerate descendants of Columbus' countrymen, and also that just here at the Bay of Arrows a shipload of poor negro slaves bought by some philanthropists out of captivity in the southern states of the same nation were dumped, guests of the little negro republic of Haiti! The predatory history of the conquest of the western hemisphere presents ironic incidents! . . . Now follow some of the results to the native of 'the progress of civilization.'"

There followed some scenes designed to picture the life of the Caribs once they had been enslaved by the Spaniards, who had taken possession of their island homes in the name of a distant king and of the Holy Faith. Frail bronze figures were carrying heavy burdens, digging into the mountains in a mad search for gold, drugged with alcohol, suffering with the loathsome diseases brought them by the strangers,—tuberculosis, syphilis, smallpox. And in conclusion a picture of the miserable

remnants of the aborigines herded within a small reservation on the shores of one of the islands,—a handful of sickly, diseased, depraved creatures.

“Of whom,” observed an ethnologist, “probably not one was of pure Indian descent, so mixed had their race become with the dregs of white Europeans and the negroes imported from Africa to do the heavy labor on the plantations that neither the Indian nor the European could endure. This last picture was taken at the beginning of the twentieth Xian century when the few remaining West Indians had been segregated by the English (who then occupied their ancestors’ homes) on the bleak coast of one small island. Now the aborigines are practically extinct although it is probable that related peoples have fortunately been preserved in Central and South America whose existence and present condition it will be one of our efforts to ascertain.”

Here an agronomist took up the tale of the conquest of this western world by the Europeans . . .

“Within less than a century of the first discovery of these islands by Columbus the entire native population had been practically exterminated,—several millions of them it is estimated,—due to the cruel rapacity of their conquerors, and the white men were already bringing over African slaves by the shipload to work those plantations of sugar and coffee and spices, which had proved to be the veritable gold mines and which the whites were too feeble or too lazy to work for themselves.”

“A fine illustration of the blindness of greed,” the old Greek interpolated, “of the working of the profit motive—and of the nullity of the gospel of Christ when applied by men corrupted by greed! . . . The gold that those early Conquerors craved and sought everywhere lay under their feet in the marvelously fertile soil, in the strange products of nature that surrounded

them on all sides. But they lacked the intelligence to perceive it, their minds being blinded by the lust for gold, something tangible to seize and carry off in their ships to their homes. All these early explorations of the New World, as they came to call this western hemisphere, had as their chief incentive a mistaken quest for the yellow metal, which for so many centuries remained mankind's greatest delusion!"

The story proceeded on down the centuries. There were pictures showing the cultural efforts of the Roman church marching side by side with the armed secular exploiters, of the Dominican fathers working with slave labor the sugar fields of Martinique, or leading a piratical expedition against a neighbor island. Next came the story of the bitter rivalries among the European nations for exclusive possession of the West Indies and their treasures, two centuries of battles between Spanish, English, French, Dutch, snatching and fleeing and recapturing the islands, parceling out among themselves those lands first raped from the Indians by the Spanish discoverers and already largely peopled by negro bondmen. . . .

"Illustrating," an ethnologist commented, "the predatory methods of colonization and exploitation of new land under the ancient principle of might makes right and the earth belongs to that social group which can capture it and hold it for its own selfish enjoyment. This principle, we should remember, was in full force after the last Great War in Europe when on making peace large tracts of Northern Africa and Asia Minor were handed over (under a legal fiction) to the English and the French to be exploited for the sole benefit of the conquerors. The jungle law." . . .

A series of pictures was next shown illustrating the life of the negro race in these tropical islands, their numbers, dwellings, labors, and the dilution of black blood with white,

producing a variety of colors; the servile insurrections in Haiti, with bloody suppression, and the ultimate conquest of the islands by the negroes through their endurance.

“In time the black man, first brought as a slave to the West Indies to perform the hard labor that the whites refused to do, had increased until for every white man there were nearly twenty black or colored inhabitants. Within three hundred years the negro slave had increased fivefold, and it was estimated that at the end of another century not five percent of the black population were without the taint of venereal disease, so pervasively had the white conquerors distributed their vices, and there was also a general infection of malaria, hook-worm, smallpox,—all filth diseases. The white men who had extracted millions of gold from their rich plantations could not afford to spend a thousandth part of this huge pelf upon adequate sanitary services in an effort to eradicate the diseases they had transmitted to their slaves. . . . One result was that in the course of time slave labor became so unprofitable that the conquerors finally emancipated their black slaves with much beating of philanthropic tom-toms. . . . The black man owed nothing to the humanity or even to the intelligent self-interest of his white masters: it was an accident of fate that first snatched him from his African home and another twist of blind fate that finally set him free in the western hemisphere and exposed him to the gentle mercies of his former masters as employers of labor in a free competitive market! . . .

“And now we come to one of the most interesting episodes in the tragic story of this earthly paradise after it was accidentally discovered by greedy Europeans and exposed to the curious processes of what they called civilization. Enter the great United States of America on the scene! Behold the Virgin Islands, Porto Rico, and Haiti—and one might add with equal

point the Philippine Islands in the East Indies. Observe the working of the 'concession,' the capitalistic 'loan' (which multiplies miraculously!), 'national interest,' 'policing of backward countries' and all the rest of the imperialistic jargon!"

Various incidents of the "Americanization" of the West Indies were presented, some stupid, some amusingly naïve. Old Felix, who knew this chapter of the history of that mighty people whose remains were about to be uncovered, withdrew to one of the observation compartments of the airliner where could be noted their swift progress over the ocean. They were cutting across the cloudless heavens like a meteor flash, at an altitude of three thousand meters, yet with almost no motion within the ship. Far below the sea lay like a burnished metal plaque. Within an hour they would be above that sandy strip of Bahama key where it was thought Columbus had dropped anchor on his memorable first voyage, Cat Island. The Commander intimated that it might be impossible to descry even a reef because of the rising of the sea level in this part of the world.

"Just as well," the old man mused. "It was always a matter of dispute among the geographers just where the old pirate first landed, and I can't see that it made any difference to the old world, and none whatever to us. . . . If he had foundered at sea as he very well might have it might possibly have been better for the human race as a whole. The Americans, even the Anglo-Saxon ones, in spite of their bragging writers and orators have contributed little of permanent value to humanity and that little we moderns have largely rewritten. They are chiefly of importance to us these days as a terrible warning, a horrible example of what enlightened peoples should not do in the conduct of their affairs. If ever again the currents of human destiny should turn back into the grooves so deeply worn in this North America, that would be the end

of human society on this planet as it very nearly was a thousand years ago thanks to the mad pursuit of selfish ends, of their insensate gospel of 'individualism,' their greed, and their arrogance!"

His musing on the fate of the old New World was interrupted by the Commander who asked if he should lower the airship so that they might see something of the lands that Columbus first invaded. Presently the great airship slackened speed and spiraled downward towards the sea out of which emerged to sight a few small dots of land.

"Those are Porto Rico and Santo Domingo and farther east is the tip of Cuba," the Commander indicated on the metal mirror above his control board. "They are of course rather smaller than they used to be thanks to the subsidence of the land and the rise of the sea level. But they are still lovely, and look as if they might be habitable."

"They were once a paradise—before the white race got there—the veritable Garden of Hesperides!"

"They might have become that once more," the Commander observed. "The Ice Cap could not have disturbed their inhabitants greatly, and the blacks mingling with the few whites left on the islands might have produced by this time an excellent stock."

"You would have been killed for saying less than that in North America a thousand years ago," the old man remarked laughingly.

"They would be a peaceable, lazy lot, no doubt, like the old Malays, cultivating their small bits of ground, fishing and bathing and making love beneath the stars."

"We might stop there on our way back, also in Mexico where a stronger race of Indians struggled to emerge from the degradation into which the white man's rule had brought them in four short centuries. . . . I should much like to ob-

serve what happened to those so-called primitive peoples when let alone and allowed to relapse to their previous state of culture,—whether all the dire results predicted by the ancient ethnologists and politicians and journalists came about. I expect at the worse when outside the urge of world culture a race merely grows simple once more, childlike and dull and lazy, possibly superstitious: they cease to wear clothes, which is a good thing, and to mumble formulas they neither understand nor believe. The human animal in his primitive condition was usually a peaceable enough creature, when not tortured or misled by his fears. . . .

“I seem to remember that just about here where we are cruising there was once an interesting attempt by some Englishman to breed a superior stock of negro slaves. To provide better workers for his plantations, of course, not for eugenic reasons, but all the same it was the one intelligent effort to improve the negro race I have read of. With the emancipation of the slave—for economic reasons as I have already said—this attempt to improve the breed ended. But it would be interesting to see if any trace of that larger, stronger negro stock still remains!”

“After a thousand years and more?” the Commander remarked dubiously. “So few traces of the famous Japanese culture have been found.”

“But they were a different sort of people, a so-called progressive people who adopted the machine culture of the westerners enthusiastically. Rarely anything is left of such peoples except their machines! . . . What’s that?”

The airliner had dropped to within a few hundred feet of the surface of the sea, which was dimpled under the impact of a fresh southwesterly breeze that brought delicious spicy odors from the islands through which they were passing. A

long low dark line underneath the surface of the sea indicated something like a coral reef of a curiously exact outline.

"That must be the new seawall I have heard described," the Commander explained, examining the shadow on the sea with powerful glasses. "Yes, it is nearly ready to emerge from the sea. . . . The most stupendous engineering undertaking of any time! . . . You know how they worked it? They studied the habits of the coral-building insects and discovered how to put these minute creatures to work in a prescribed area on a set task by providing them with the right environment and food for immense reduplication. Then they enlarged the area and speeded them up to build some hundreds of miles of solid breakwaters. . . .

"One of the reasons that the Ice Cap did so much devastation in North America and Europe was because the former course of the tropical currents had been altered by submarine changes so that the northern latitudes were no longer bathed perpetually with warm sea currents. We have undertaken to rebuild the contours and redirect the sea currents in order that we may melt off what remains of the ice in this continent and I presume later we shall make an effort to modify the climate of Northern Europe. That will be more difficult unless our bacteriologists breed some kind of insect that will build in colder water. But that is not impossible. . . . You know they are called 'the Red and White Work Battalions.'" . . . Very useful little devils they are!"

The old man laughed at the account of the coral-building insect battalions.

"There!" the young Commander exclaimed suddenly after consulting his chart, and signaling for a dead stop. "Here is the sand bank where Columbus first made land, as nearly as I can tell."

"It makes little difference whether it is the right one! My

emotions are not stirred by such memories as those of the ancients were by the site where St. Peter lost his shoe or the Sybil of Cumæ delivered her oracles, or Queen Mary of Scotland was murdered. . . . That glimpse of our new insect battalions and their magnificent accomplishment seems to me much more remarkable. . . . Well, start up your ship, Commander, and I will take a cup of bouillon. It must be around noon, although the sun is just rising! In your occupation one should never grow old, because you spend your life chasing the sun around just at dawn. What do you call your meals,—breakfasts?"

"Oh, we sailors always stick to old habits and keep land time. All meals are served at the same hour—six-thirty sun time. . . . Here comes my tray. Will you take a bite with me?"

"What is this smelly mess?" Felix sniffed dubiously as the attendant presented his tray of food.

"A Spanish dinner such as Columbus and his sailors used to eat, as nearly as cook could manage with what he has in his locker. . . . You needn't eat much of it, for there will be another tray presently that might suit you better. This is just for fun!"

To the new world taste the Spanish food looked anything but inviting either in smell or in taste,—a hunk of rank salt beef, a hunk of moldy bread, some soggy macaroni, and a carafe of muddy red wine.

"If Columbus and his men lived on such fare as this, no wonder they had mutinies as well as scurvy aboard!"

The tray of Columbus' rations being waved aside, a boy appeared with another tray covered with fresh fruits, some cassava bread, a roasted parrot, and a pleasant sort of drink made from coffee berries.

"This is better!" Felix exclaimed eating the food with relish.

“I suppose it is cook’s imitation of the fare which the Indian savages offered their civilized white guests. . . . So far as their food went the despised Caribbean savages could have taught Columbus and his crew something, which was often the case I fancy.” . . .

The airship was now proceeding almost due north along the coast that was once called Florida. Felix remembering the story of Ponce de Leon and his search through the Florida swamps for the fountain of eternal youth inquired of the Commander what had become of that sandy spit of land.

“It has largely disappeared, just washed away and sunk below the sea. All that is left you can see if you will look through these strong projection glasses,—over there towards the west. . . . Those odd-looking domes like the bottoms of huge iron kettles were the receptacles in which they used to store their rain water, and that windowless wall a little south of us is the top of one of the famous American skyscrapers at Miami. The inhabitants of Florida, which was vast and as flat as a pancake, were fond of building these monstrosities, although they could have seen nothing worth looking at from them. . . .

“It must have been a queer sort of place, this Florida of the ancient Americans! A huge sand spit just above sea level, a thousand miles of it more or less, and all pretty much alike. For many years after the discovery of the New World, it was a wild, desolate country of swamps and pine forests where wild cattle roamed and a few Indians lived and some of the degenerate descendants of the Spanish settlers. But towards the end of the Xian era as the country lying farther north became thickly peopled and life got less tolerable in their noisy, dirty cities numbers of exhausted city dwellers fled from the hardships of cold winters and the monotony of their lives

in the factory cities they lived in to this 'land of sunshine' as they called it—sunshine and not much else but sand and a kind of scrubby pine.

"These refugees from the North built up a sort of pasteboard civilization all over the barren wastes of Florida. The habit of deserting the cold North annually or permanently increased as the North Americans became richer, more self-indulgent and tenderer. This Florida, now for the most part submerged beneath the sea, was once the scene of the liveliest land speculation the world had ever known. Men and women bought and sold strips of its sandy soil—even bits that were still under water—back and forth, over and over, at increased prices, until values had doubled and quadrupled and pretty much the entire thousand mile stretch of scrub pine and sand had been laid out in imaginary cities and towns. A most desolate and ridiculous appearing place it was judging from the photographs that have been preserved of the country taken at that time,—a network of surveyors' stakes, cement roads, lath-and-plaster villas in variegated designs and colors, gas stations, fields devoted to a popular game of rubber ball called golf, and all the other typical attributes of American civilization.

"As the Ice Cap advanced there was naturally a sudden increase in the population of warmer lands,—of Florida, Texas, and California,—as the inhabitants of the far North fled from the icy winters, until this sand spit became intolerably crowded and the food supply must have given out. All we can guess is that as the ocean level rose gradually they were drowned out, like rats—all but the few able to escape in ships to the warm islands of the Caribbean. Most of them were caught between two great natural forces, ice and water, and perished miserably—or starved. . . .

"It is said that great tumuli of their automotive machines in which most of them made the trek to Florida have been found

scattered all about but chiefly in the northern part. Very likely they found their machines useless because of an insufficient supply of the special fluid by means of which they were propelled. Some of these odd cars have been excavated in more or less good preservation and will be brought to our museums to show our children how clumsily these people transported themselves. One could make as much as seventy or eighty miles an hour in them, our engineers calculate. But not safely. Their gas-cars were the cause of the large annual mortality among Americans, the many violent deaths on their concrete roads. They say more persons were killed each year in them than died in the battles of the Great War. A queer people! To allow such murder machines to be driven by anybody, insane or drunk or imbecile, careering at such speeds on public highways!" . . .

"So that is Florida," the old man murmured, gazing steadily at the fragmentary remains of what had once been the vast American Baiæ, the land of sunshine and oranges, of pasteboard dwellings and lunchcounter living, of gas and food stands and miniature golf courses. . . . "No great loss, that," he muttered dismissing Florida forever from his attention.

The young Commander chuckled appreciatively.

"You may feel that way about the whole blooming show of this American civilization from what the fellows in the transport department tell me. I've been getting up American history since I was assigned to this job, reading bits of their newspapers and magazines which, as you know better than I, they produced by the ton. They are crammed with the oddest sort of culch, doll-house stories, blackguardly doings, rascally performances in politics and business, stickup men and gun men as they called them, who were fairly decent compared with their more respectable fellow citizens who did their dirty deeds in secret. Bootleggers, bandits, and bank presidents,—all very

much the same . . . a crazy sort of place—and deadly dull from what I can make out!”

The old man smiled at the naïve reaction of the young Commander to the wonders of American civilization as chronicled by themselves.

“They would have thought *you* crazy, my boy, if you had expressed yourself like that over here a thousand years ago!”

With a subtle smile the old man left for his suite to take a short nap. The airliner was sailing steadily north, although at a slower pace than before. It was now passing the low marshy coast of the Carolinas behind which through powerful projector glasses could be seen a low mountain range covered with a dense forest of green trees.

Just at noon, sun time, the airship was hovering over what had once been the great city of New York, now from what could be seen through the observation ports of the airship a narrow strip of humped and scrubby waste land. On their way in they had passed an irregular line of low hills through which to the north there reached a broad estuary where once a river had entered the sea.

Felix who had returned to the control deck as the airship had drawn near to its destination gazed down upon the site of what had once been so much human activity, trying to recall the many photographs and fanciful sketches of the famous Skyline of the American metropolis, lighted at night by rays of electricity streaming through millions of eyeholes in the vast walls of steel and concrete. Hardly any contrast could be greater than that much vaunted appearance and the present still, wooded landscape, except what the same scene once presented to Hendrik Hudson and his fellow adventurers fifteen hundred years, more or less, ago!

“When man steps out of the picture, Nature takes hold and

cleans the slate," he murmured, congratulating himself again that he had not been born too soon. New York, thus returned to its pristine peace and simplicity, the warrens of its former inhabitants quite buried in mounds of rubbish, already covered with a thin growth of trees, was a much more pleasing object than it could have been when six or more millions of human beings were striving amid din and dirt and bustle to exist where properly only a few thousands at the most should have lived. . . .

The Commander having been in telephonic communication with the Chief of Operations below presently began to nose the airliner downward towards the berth that had been prepared for it midway between two of the more prominent humps that outlined more or less systematically the former city by a series of ridges. The biggest hump of all had been chosen against which to anchor the ship,—the flattened remnants of what had once been the highest building in the world, which had shot up into the sky a fifth of a mile from the street level and was prepared to house some ten thousand human beings in its tiers of office cubbyholes, although having been built at the beginning of the Great Decline it had never attained anything like that population. Now it was merely a rather more prominent hump among a cluster of similar humps, which gave the landscape the appearance of an abandoned "beehive" smelting works on an enormous scale.

"You are now directly in New York's most famous traffic lane, their Fifth Avenue, a sort of Via Sacra where they once held their triumphal processions for distinguished visitors—you know the kind of thing, a series of gas-cars with the heroes standing up and bowing and waving tall hats, while the spectators showered down on them from the cliff buildings tons of paper ribbons? An odd sort of triumph that! . . . It was, I suppose, one of the most thronged spots the world has ever

held," the Commander remarked, waving his arm at the scrubby depression into which the giant airship had by this time sunk.

"It seems unreal!" old Felix murmured. "To think that a little cold weather and a few hundred years of abandonment could transform such a busy place with all those immense buildings of steel and concrete into this dump! They may have lied about the height of their buildings or we may have been mistaken in our measurements."

"There must be considerable rubbish beneath us, raising the general level some hundreds of feet maybe. . . . Will you disembark? They will want to take you out of this melancholy dump to the pleasant place in the country they have prepared for your headquarters."

A light wire rope having been dropped from the bottom surface of the ship the disembarkation was quickly accomplished through a number of bucket platforms unwound from the ship's hold, and the passengers found themselves once more on earth. A group of the leaders of the Expeditionary Force were waiting to welcome Felix and his companions, all vigorous, youngish men in ordinary workmen's clothes. The Chief of Operations, who had been chosen to take charge of this advance base of the Expedition, had been one of the old Greek's aides and had been picked for this important position not only because of his sound learning and technical proficiency gained in previous researches in Italy and Spain and one futile expedition to discover the site of old London, but also because of his personal qualities of courage and resourcefulness and enthusiasm. . . .

Chapter Seven

‘‘LITTLE OLD NEW YORK’’

A PLEASANT voyage across?”

“Charming! Just twenty-four hours, but not a full day yet.”

“We may cut that by a half when we go through the upper air as we shall some day,” the Commander suggested.

“Oh, you youngsters! Always trying to break records! . . . If we had taken the short cut through the stratosphere what should we have seen of those charming islands Columbus discovered? or of the new coral-built breakwater? I’ll never go that way to save a few hours and run the risk of freezing.”

The younger men smiled at the old man’s petulance and conservatism, a sign of his increasing years.

“Would you care to stretch your legs and have a glimpse of Greater New York before going to the quarters in the country we have made ready for you? . . . You are now in the very heart of the greatest aggregation of immense buildings ever built by man,” the Chief remarked, as the party turned north up the lane between the humps.

“I see you have acquired the detestable American blowpipe style,” the old man observed with a disarming smile.

“It’s hard not to fall into their way of thinking and talking when you are digging up the monstrosities these people committed here. . . . We picked our way into one of their two great communication centers yesterday, the larger one . . . Over there!” he waved his hand in the direction of Forty-

second Street. "It was all covered over apparently with great masses of building, while their 'trains' as they called them ran in deep trenches far below the surface like mole tracks. They were indefatigable burrowers and builders I must admit. . . . It is hard to tell sometimes what they used their huge buildings for or why they needed so many of them. Some of the newer ones apparently were never occupied before the exodus! . . . Perhaps they were erected for display like the arches about a Roman forum?"

"More likely in the expectation of squeezing the older buildings out of use according to the golden rule of competition," Felix remarked. "'Bigger and better' was their motto, which being interpreted meant something that would put the other fellow out of business. . . . You see, Chief, I too can use their lingo when I want to! . . . When the big smash came there was over twice the floor space in New York, so we estimate, that could possibly be used and rents had fallen greatly and taxes could not be collected. . . . The banks,—that is, the rich men gambling with the savings of the little people,—owned most of these vast buildings—but they could not make them *pay*, although there were many homeless people wandering through the streets!"

"I have a theory," remarked the Chief, "that the successful business men, their very rich men, erected these immense buildings as monuments to themselves, to preserve their names, as well as for investments. There were many lodging houses, huge caravansaries, called by the names of unknown people, as well as giant office cliffs called after the name of some popular gas-engine maker or soft drink millionaire. . . . There was one over there!" The Chief pointed off to a stubby hummock in the narrow defile of hummocks. "That, I take it, was a case in point,—the Chrysler Building. . . . It was never fully occupied from what we can find out . . . and there is an area

farther up this avenue that we haven't done anything with yet, a place for theaters and amusements with offices piled on top, unfinished I imagine."

"Oh, you mean the Amusement Center? It was the gift of a philanthropic millionaire who spent his life trying to give away the surplus of wealth his immense riches brought him and never caught up. This was his last experiment in divesting himself of his clogging wealth. . . . I think his idea was to keep the mass of the population amused—or drugged rather—while the system that created the benefactor's surplus riches was grinding them to death. Much that was done those last years was designed to keep people from thinking about their unhappy fate! Dangerous, you see, to the existing order."

Felix stopped at the corner of what had once been Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street to peer down the narrow valley between the rubbish humps from which already the afternoon sun was retreating.

"They could have had only an hour or two of sunlight in these canyons even when the sun shone above the city," he remarked sadly.

"Yes, it gets cold and lonesome in these valleys, even in summer—what must it have been in cold and stormy weather! . . . You had better defer further exploration until you have rested and the sun is overhead," the Chief urged solicitously.

The old man gazed up and down the empty ways of the old city with the absorption of one who at last perceives the actual appearance of things long imagined. He seemed overwhelmed by the reality, or rather by the prodigious evidences of what had once been a reality.

"I fancy that the greatest difference between Then and Now," he murmured reflectively, "must have been the noise. Even at dead of night and early morning, so their accounts say, when few were moving about there was a terrific roar, like

perpetual thunder, reverberating through these narrow canyons."

"There were not many moments day or night when some of the seven million beings squeezed into this spot were not on the move—for you must remember they lighted their cities artificially as we do, only more glaringly."

"Yes, I know, they lived by artificial light, day and night. . . . But the noise must have been the hardest thing to endure of all the evil aspects in this vast rabbit warren. Why do you suppose they hived so closely?"

The younger man shook his head as if he had often pondered this question and found no satisfactory solution.

"There were ample open spaces surrounding their largest cities even at the height of their population, and they had mastered to a considerable extent methods of rapid transit, although they had not yet found the secret of direct solar energy as we have or invented anything as serviceable as our little airtaxis."

One of these umbrella-shaped cars hovering nearby, at a signal from the Chief, dropped between the mounds of rubbish and waited to receive the two men. Then mounting vertically to clear the brush and broken ground, it sailed off rapidly eastwards.

"We have found a pleasant retreat for you on what was then known as Long Island (which by the way is neither long nor an island any more!). That was the favorite resort for their millionaires, where they built their big villas and played at country life, though they were never content to stay in any one place for long, having an itch for movement and change which every American developed who had the means to travel. . . . The spot we have chosen is not far from the headquarters of the Expedition, which we are establishing on

the summit of their old transportation center back there, and it will take us only a few minutes to reach by air.”

“So you are putting me up on Long Island,” the old man chuckled, “where those famous American orgies they called houseparties once happened, at least in their stories and plays! The Elysium of the prosperous American family during the epoch of decadence. . . . Well, well, I never thought to spend a night or week-end in one of those luxurious Long Island villas. Thank God, as they used to say, I shall not have to be the helpless victim of an energetic lion-hunting American hostess. That must have been an ordeal for any simple man!”

The airtaxi settled in a clearing among the tall trees that now covered the environs of the former city.

“Here we are already,” said the Chief, dismounting and helping to steady the little car while the old man climbed out. “Aren’t these splendid trees! Old Long Island, as I recall, was mostly a barren, sandy waste, but those old fellows knew enough to plant around their places and the result today is this magnificent forest.”

“They are beauties!” the old man exclaimed appreciatively, gazing up at the lofty crests of the trees, which were mostly slim sentinel pines. “We have nothing like them in Africa.”

“No, the forests which now cover most of the continent once more, as they did before the Europeans arrived, are the best product I have yet found over here. The soil and the climate seem adapted to growing big trees.”

“Perhaps that is what we shall decide to do with North America—make it into a huge forest preserve for wild animals and the descendants of the aborigines if we discover any!” the old man suggested lightly. . . . “What is that?” He pointed to a low stone wall, part of a foundation for a building. “You don’t say you discovered any of their houses still standing?”

“Not entire houses, but considerable fragments of the walls from which it has been easy to reconstruct the building pretty much as it was originally. . . . You see the glacial moraines never quite reached New York, which will make our job much easier. They stopped a hundred miles or so to the north and gradually melted, the waste being carried towards the sea, and ultimately filled what they called the Sound and the East River, so that now Long Island is an integral part of the mainland, and Manhattan is no longer an island even in form.”

“Did you find anything worth while here?”

“Not much—but so far we have uncovered only one wing where they housed their guests I take it.”

“These American millionaires were great collectors, especially when they got to be the creditors of Europe after the Great War. They probably kept most of their loot in their country houses. I mean the fine art they took from Europe?”

The younger man shook his head dubiously.

“We haven’t yet discovered it. . . . Paintings and tapestries would hardly survive all these centuries, and besides as they lived in fear of being robbed,—it was a lawless time as you know well,—they kept most of their precious things in museums or locked away in deep vaults underground protected by thick steel walls. We are likely to find more of their art treasures shut up in those dark bank vaults than out here in the country. . . . This place had a special vault, constructed with great ingenuity, where was kept their illicitly smuggled liquor. They were as a rule more concerned about their liquor supply than about their paintings and statues and books, which they usually bought for show rather than for use or enjoyment.”

As the two men talked they had proceeded along a narrow path cut in the forest towards the walls of the ancient building

and were now standing on a grassy lawn in front of the ruin. Some light temporary roofing had been put on the old walls.

"There!" the Chief exclaimed triumphantly, pointing to the structure which resembled a cowshed as much as anything. "Behold your palace! You are to live in what was once the renowned country house of the great banker, Morganthal!"

Felix laughed appreciatively as over some fine joke.

"The worst and the best of his tribe, the old robber! I wish he might be here to welcome us. . . . He was something of a man, with some humor and imagination and a real love for the beautiful things he collected with his wealth taken from millions of little people. I think he would have appreciated the situation, as few of his contemporaries could, and would have wanted to join our Expedition, as Patron."

"What you see of the walls of his old villa must have been a second story, with large, communicating sleeping rooms. You remember their sexual customs, how they evaded the rules of their priestly class as to monogamy by assigning adjacent bedrooms to men and women enamored of each other? One of their favorite hypocrisies. . . . We've come across some curious indications."

"No doubt, no doubt," the old man muttered indifferently. "What always strikes the explorer of a later age are the curious sex customs of an earlier epoch. Thank God, as they used to say, nowadays we have got rid of that sort of prurient curiosity as to who sleeps with whom and so can give our minds to more important considerations! . . .

"From what I have gleaned out of the old records, from their novels and plays largely, this ancient American civilization must have been based on the pursuit of three appetites,—for stimulants, for women, and for money (with which to gratify the two other appetites!). One could reproduce almost hour by hour the ordinary day of a great magnate such as the man

who once lived in this house and of the owners of the neighboring villas. Some hours after the sun had risen (for he had not gone to bed until nearly daybreak) he tore himself from the embrace of his temporary woman whoever she might have been, presumably not his legal wife, swallowed a cup of strong hot coffee, and with some form of the tobacco drug in his mouth to soothe his nerves, got into either a swift gas-car or motor-boat or later a clumsy and dangerous flying machine and set out for his city offices, accompanied by a secretary male or female to whom he gave verbal instructions as they traveled.

“Once in his own private corner of one of those cliff buildings whose remains we have just seen, he became immersed in a mass of papers that his clerks presented him for examination or saw clients and other magnates or talked with them over a system of wired communication, dictated letters, listened maybe to reports of the markets ticked out by a special machine in one corner of his offices, gave orders to buy or sell shares in different industries (about which he knew nothing except the market prices of their shares), and so on. He might if he felt it of enough importance or personal interest attend the directors’ meetings of these same corporations in whose shares he had been trading and at luncheon consummate some ‘deal’ to his own advantage.

“As the afternoon began to wane he left his offices and proceeded slowly up through the city, stopping at one or more of the private assemblies called ‘clubs’ to imbibe strong stimulants which his tired nerves already demanded. After nightfall he continued farther up town to some house where in company with twenty or thirty or forty of his kind he had dinner and more alcohol—or he attended one of those dreary semi-public functions called a ‘banquet,’ where there was also much bad liquor, tobacco smoke, and sodden discourse (prepared for publication and therefore insincere).

“After the dinner, which was as indigestible as it could be made by an expert cook, in order to tempt appetites dulled by tobacco and alcohol, he might have ‘looked in’ at some form of entertainment, a private ball or a theater or the opera, but more often he betook himself to some low haunt where at enormous prices hired female entertainers would try to stimulate his jaded sex appetites, by a kind of dancing that was frankly a semi-nude sexual embrace. Then home to bed, with or without the befuddled fondlings of some woman who might or might not be the same one from whose arms he had arisen the previous morning. . . .

“Do you wonder, my friend, that public affairs as well as private business began to go every which way and finally landed their civilization in the big mess? What surprises me is that a society run by such drugged, alcoholized, and sex-drained men at the head of it managed to keep moving as long as it did.”

The younger man laughed at the old Greek’s caustic description of the great American business man’s customary day. He protested,—

“You have been reading too many of their magazines and newspapers, sir! That couldn’t have been true of the lives of the majority even among the rich citizens of that time. They could never have stood the pace, as they used to say.”

“Many of them didn’t for long: they succumbed to sex or alcohol or both.”

“There must have been millions of sober hard-working simple-living assistants, technicians like myself, whose chief interest was in running the machine and who had to keep clear-minded to do it. . . . They may have had no very lofty motives in leading sober lives, merely the will to survive and get on top. But it was only the occasional new millionaire who

went on the loose as you have just described. Otherwise how could the big machine have kept running as well as it did?"

"Perhaps, perhaps," Felix admitted, "I may have depended too much on their writers."

"I have been looking over some of that stuff too, especially their popular plays. They were fierce! and dull, my eye, how dull! Just copulation and drink, adultery and silly jokes! . . . But one should not give too much weight to the evidence presented by writers, even concerning their own times about which they might be presumed to know something. . . . If one were to take literally all that has been written of the vices and follies of mankind, the human race, tough as it undoubtedly is, would have long since disappeared from this earth to be replaced by something more intelligent and more orderly, like dogs or ants or other insects. I agree with you that we must interpret such records with more than a grain of salt and correct whatever conclusions we make from them by other kinds of evidence, which is what I hope you can do.

"We shall try to give you a variety of data on these people, some of which will confirm what their most lurid writers said about them and other that will make you marvel how a people so ingenious and endowed with such irrepressible energies ever collapsed as they did, almost at the first touch of adversity! A curious people."

"They were mad, towards the end," the old Greek muttered. "They courted destruction more rashly than any race that ever lived on this earth. 'Whom the gods desire to destroy they first make mad!'" . . .

"Come inside, sir, and see your quarters, which we have tried to make as comfortable as possible in this wilderness. For I hope you will be staying with the Expedition some time. You will find so much of interest to you."

"I am not so sure of that," the old man retorted. "I think I know pretty much what one may expect to find in America! . . . But this forest is worth the voyage, at any rate."

The ancient villa of the American banker had been quite thoroughly excavated within and one wing was restored for living purposes. On account of the higher ground level due to ten centuries of earth accretions what appeared on the outside as a low shed revealed within several stories containing large apartments, one of which more solidly built than the rest of the house had been fitted up for the old man's quarters, with a large loggia on the roof for a sleeping apartment in accordance with the African habit.

That evening dinner was served in what was thought to be the library of the villa beneath Felix's quarters and was attended by a number of the old man's former associates in the University of Khartoum. Glancing down the long well-proportioned library Felix observed,—

"The House of Morgenthal prided itself upon its patronage of literature and the fine arts. One wonders how they found time to read or think, so many and so complex were their financial and political burdens, and the most exacting burden of all in those barbarous times the necessity, as they thought, to be always on parade for one trivial occasion or another, from reception and banquet to interminable committee meetings and personal interviews with publicity agents, hurried errands hither and thither, a dozen crossings of the ocean in their slow steamships to attend international conferences (where nothing was accomplished) in London or Paris, in their frantic efforts to bolster up the crumbling régime. However, it gave the prominent individual that sense of busy self-importance which these Americans seem to have craved above everything! . . .

All the same this is a remarkable room. You found no pictures or books, of course?"

"Only this!" One of the young men held out a bulky brittle bundle of printed leaves which the old man took with interest. Its large frail pages had been reënforced with transparent silk to keep them from crumbling. The cover was decorated with a rough drawing of a partly clothed female in color, whose freshness had faded.

"They were fond of putting female figures on their magazine covers—what they called 'sex appeal,' a meretricious way of inducing the casual passer-by to buy the magazine less for what it might have within it than for the stimulating sex picture! Even the merchants so far as they could invested their wares in their advertisements with 'sex appeal.' . . . *The Saturday Post* of May 1, 1933," the old man read off. "So this is a copy of the most widely read magazine during the last decades of America! I have often read about it, but never before saw a copy. . . . It was what they thought to be the typical intellectual product of their civilization, the 'Go-Getters magazine,' the young men's pet organ . . . half or rather two-thirds filled with those strange advertisements of goods they made, another third with queer pictures mostly of young men and women, and a thin dribble of text between picture and advertisement . . . well, well," the old man murmured interestedly, turning the frail pages. "No doubt it has more of interest in it now than when it was issued fresh from the press, in several million copies, and hawked about the streets for a nickel. Have you found anything in it?" he asked the young man to whom he returned the magazine.

"Oh, just the usual queer lot of fiction, exciting stories about the old West, Indians, cowboys and the rest, all of which had long since disappeared, or about bootleggers who provided a new field of romance. . . . But what is singular and of more

interest to you than their unreal fiction are the serious articles as they called them, all about how to get back to their ‘prosperity.’ This magazine was all for getting money out of the European nations, by war if necessary, for shutting out European manufactures and all that sort of thing. It was intensely patriotic and nationalistic and belligerent, inciting its readers to swagger and bully. I showed the stuff to one of our economists, and he said it was a long way behind the best thought of the time on such matters, filled with misstatements, absurdities, and theories of trade and government already exploded.”

“Just a poisonous propaganda sheet,” Felix commented. “There were so many of them! No wonder the average citizen of that time refused to interest himself in serious matters; he was forever receiving so much bad advice! By eye and ear every hour of the day. . . . Who is that amiable-looking old gentleman?” he inquired, pointing to a woodcut of a benign old man.

“That’s Franklin, evidently their patron saint.”

“Oh, Benjamin, one of the Founders, a clever old rascal whose crude philosophy had an immense vogue among his people.”

“In the same place where we found that copy of the *Post*, some minor apartment belonging to a tutor or secretary or upper servant, we uncovered a heap of gold coins. Evidently the person who lived in that room did not have faith in banks although he served the greatest banker of his time. He kept his savings in coins, or ‘hoarded’ as they used to call it.”

“His gold coins became almost valueless before the end anyhow, and that is probably why you found them. . . . You know that the Americans having accumulated an immense pile of gold after the Great War were left with it on their hands when almost all the rest of the peoples of the world

finding their debt burdens intolerable decided sensibly at last that the use of gold as a standard of all values was pure folly, as it obviously had been for a long time, working hardship for the many debtors in favor of the few creditors. So they simply ignored it and returned to the ancient practice of barter in trade. Gold no longer being in demand as money this rich American nation was like Midas in the old fable, starving because everything it touched turned to gold! . . .

"The day came when some German chemist discovered the riddle of making gold synthetically and patriotically turned the secret over to his government. Presently the Germans made an enormous quantity of the stuff and when their neighbor France got insistent upon being paid for the damages of the war, never expecting to receive a tenth part of her demands, lo! the Germans shipped a trainload of their manufactured gold to Paris! . . . After that the cat was out of the bag; nobody wanted gold, wouldn't take it at any price.

"The French bellowed as usual over German 'perfidy,' although they had been making the world unsafe for a generation by their threats of what they would do if Germany didn't pay. One of the little ironies of history which proves that what the French nation really wanted was not the money but a stranglehold on their ancient enemy. . . . And to think that in a few years after that both peoples with their thousand-year-old feud so carefully nourished by their politicians were frozen into insensibility! . . . Ah, well, we have learned to manage our affairs better than they did. When the next Ice Age creeps upon us we shall either have become wise enough to know how to live under it or shall reduce the population of the earth to exactly the size that can comfortably subsist along the equatorial belt. A little reason was all that this old world lacked, but nobody had any wisdom during those last years of the Xian era." . . .

The walls of the long library of the old villa had been covered with an interesting series of prints prepared in pairs by the cartographical division, one the reproduction of an ancient photograph of the city and beside it a colored picture taken from the same position today. In the center was a blueprint showing the work of excavation already in progress and another of the projected plan for uncovering the city as a whole. . . .

"Although I am not sure that we shall want to lay bare the entire place for there is so much mere repetition, so much sameness in it," the Chief remarked as he explained to the old Greek these plans. "Many of the old pictures we enlarged from their weekly newspapers. You know the habit of the ancient Americans of wasting their Sunday mornings over enormous tomes of wood pulp?"

"Instead of going to their churches or temples as their forefathers did!"

"We have found already one of the factories in which they made these paper tomes, with the huge machines for printing them in the basement, and the cubbyholes in the upper stories where the text was prepared, even discovered in a wall safe some of the notebooks used by their scavengers of what they called 'news,' written in hieroglyphics which we have deciphered."

"Think of the energy they wasted in getting up these mammoth bundles of nonsense and misinformation and puerile amusement! All that wasted energy, besides the deterioration of brain tissue involved in the absorption of it in daily and weekly doses by their readers! They might have discovered another world with half the trouble—or made this one somewhat more livable."

"This news factory was that of *The Times*, one of the more respectable institutions of the day I believe."

"I know it! . . . As a young man I made myself go through an entire year's issues of that respectable news sheet—a dreadful task!"

"They called it educational and were always patting themselves on the back for their achievement."

"This *Times* was one of the best of its kind—it did print *some* interesting information. But a very popular news tome made in Chicago and also in Paris was unbelievably trivial and base. It dosed the inhabitants of as much as a third of this continent with vulgarities, falsehoods, and prejudices every day for fifty years. Something like spreading bacteria over the same area, only worse in its effect upon the human mind and character. . . . Newspapers were all instruments of bad teaching and bad thinking, inculcating false and foolish notions; they were usually owned by rich people who had their own private interests and class prejudices to promote. And what they suppressed was even more amazing than what they distorted and published. These newspapers were an even more debasing and disintegrating influence than their religions ever had been. Few paid any serious attention to the priests, but everybody read the wretched falsehoods circulated in print, and thus imbibed ideas and ideals from them and from their degraded picture stories, which were offered like poison drink at every street corner. . . . The wonder is not that a people whose minds were thus drugged went to pieces ultimately, but that they survived as long as they did. The human race is tough, persistent!"

The old man took the head of the long table and looking up and down the rows of younger faces on either side beamed with frequent recognitions.

"This is one of the pleasantest moments of my life," he exclaimed with his impulsive gesture that had endeared him

to generations of youths. "Being just here with you all! It reminds me a little of those summer festivals these old Americans were so fond of, when companies of collegians came together in their universities to recall former times. . . . Only they sang silly songs and retold old stories and jokes, drank and ate a great deal too much, and generally tried to act as much like children as they could. While we are gathered here as fellow workers in one of the most interesting and most important undertakings ever conceived by man, we are co-conspirators in uncovering the remains of a mighty civilization, in discovering incredible lives, and in plotting something better worth making of this great continent than they ever dreamed of, now that it has been miraculously cleaned of all their mistakes. . . . I feel as if I were barely forty like most of you!"

There was a general laugh; one of the younger men observed,—

"You *are* as young as any of us and will never grow old! . . . You seem to think we can make over this blooming old New World in a few weeks. It's some job!"

"It took the Americans about three hundred years to make the mess they did of it, and it took several centuries of glacial action to wipe the slate clean. . . . So let us take our time, all we want, to make it over for human habitation. This continent is one of the earth's great inheritances; we must make the most of it and avoid as many of the mistakes that the ancients committed here as we can. That's why we are beginning with the excavation of New York,—to learn first what not to do!"

There was a sympathetic laugh down the table. Someone remarked,—“We are learning *that* all the time.”

Felix remarked in the next interval of conversation,—

"It was a happy thought of you to install me just here in the home of one of those bankers, who considered themselves and

(until they made a complete mess of their undertaking) were considered by most of their contemporaries to be the real rulers of that old world. Imagine elevating the money-changers and the usurers to such an exalted position! Even the Jews did not go as far as that. The rule of the bankers was more degrading than that of the soldiers who preceded them or of the priesthood. Bankers were both greedy and ignorant, not to say stupid, by profession, also cynics. . . . And yet most of us would have had the ambition, had we lived at the close of the old world, to become 'financiers' as they called themselves, to be one of that dominant class of bankers, like the estimable gentleman whose library we are enjoying tonight. He considered himself to be a great man and a great benefactor of the race. Quite natural too! One always likes to believe that what one is doing is important and beneficial.

"Many of them were good men according to the standards of their time, gave money to colleges and hospitals, and didn't cheat in small ways. But as a class they got far away from all realities, wound themselves up in a maze of paper instruments, and lived a life of complete illusion. What with credits and debits and loans in vast figures their profession was a sort of higher mathematics designed to make the other fellow pay, and having lost touch with any reality they led their world drunkenly down the short swift path to destruction. . . . And their trouble was all in their brains. As it always is!"

The old man pausing looked at the assembly of young, vigorous males at the table and added with a gentle smile,—

"It's just there, all the difference between that old chaotic world whose futile remains we are trying to uncover, and our own bright, vigorous world,—in the human brain. After all it is much the same world for us as for them, externally, the same whimsical natural phenomena we deal with as they had to. We have mastered a few more of nature's secrets; we have a

somewhat better technique for the control of our environment. But they had gone far, especially in this America, towards the same control. As their shrewdest thinkers pointed out, they had gone much farther in physical control of their environment than in moral or spiritual control of themselves. There was a ‘lag’ as they called it between the two, and it was here they smashed. . . .

“For after all they were much the same sort of being that we are today. I mean that the biologist or the physiologist would find no essential difference between the better specimens of the human race in those days and the average person of today. Their organs were the same, their tissues, so far as our laboratories can tell, even their brains. But there was a truly enormous difference in their point of view, in what men of that day considered to be the satisfactory life and how to attain it; in what their traditions and institutions and education induced them to become and what ours make of us. We could all revert within a brief period to a similar mob of hungry, avid, thwarted, savage, predatory animals that they so largely were, obsessed with the procreative function, beset with fears for subsistence, so narrowly constricted by group ideals like their vaunted ‘patriotism’ and ‘individualism’ . . . in a word hopelessly inhibited by the delusion that humanity was incapable of becoming anything other than what they felt themselves to be. ‘Human nature being as it is’ was the obsessing, paralyzing lie on the lips of every statesman, journalist, business man, dinned into them from infancy to the grave.” . . .

The old man had wandered off into a familiar realm of speculation from which he quickly roused himself and with another charming smile came back to the present and to the eager faces before him.

“So, friends, it behooves us all, you and me and everyone out here, to take warning from their dreadful mistakes and see

that such a fate—worse than the ravages of any Ice Age—does not happen to us; that we do not revert into the helplessness of ancient humanity. It was to strengthen those lines of conduct, of being, along which we are moving, the lines of our glorious free life in this bewilderingly beautiful and expanding universe that I have become so urgent for this present enterprise. . . .

“We are making our voyage of discovery to the New World each day. But we are not making it in a spirit of aggrandizement, of private or national gain, like those buccaneers of the old world. We are making our effort purely to enlarge our knowledge of the world and its former inhabitants.

“Everything about our Expedition from the first preliminary steps undertaken in our laboratories and museums and libraries to the actual equipment and installation here indicates the fundamental distinction of purpose between us and those who once before ‘discovered’ this western world. Instead of a band of loose freebooters, of bankrupts and criminals and soldiers of fortune such as were the companions of Columbus, of Cortes, of Pizarro, of Drake, we have chosen the flower of our civilization, our most active-minded and intelligent youths, selected them for their character and their accomplishments, because such men as these will know what to do, what to look for, how to make the best of this our great adventure.

“Instead of hurling ourselves like wild animals on the virgin riches of a new continent, which was the exploiting method of the ancients down to those last forlorn days of rugged individualism, we do not care whether we find gold or not—we have more than enough of that commonplace commodity at home and can make as much more of it as we want. We do not seek to enslave or kill any of the inhabitants we may chance to find secluded in the forest depths of this continent, merely to study them and help them to develop in their own way

their own lives, should we be lucky enough to discover any such descendants of the aborigines that the Europeans almost exterminated. . . . And instead of laying covetous hands on this new portion of our common inheritance and fighting among ourselves for its exclusive possession, like the French, the Spanish, and the English peoples when they found themselves in America, we have not even determined yet whether we shall care to remain in this neglected continent, whether we shall find it fit for the higher types of the civilization we are creating. . . .

“I don’t know what your feeling is, but for my part I greatly doubt whether the world needs this new continent at present, whether it would be well to ‘bring it into production’ as they used to say in their greedy fashion. It may be best to reserve it for some distant future when the world’s population has greatly expanded. And, fortunately, we no longer delude ourselves with the insane obsession that mere quantity or numbers of anything has any significance, especially multitudes of the ordinary human animal. We know enough to make quality not quantity the ultimate test of everything! . . .

“So I propose a toast in this excellent West Indian rum which your steward has thoughtfully provided for the purpose—to our Great Adventure! and turning slightly the title of an old English monopoly that had been formed to exploit the more northerly portions of North America, I address you, my comrades, as ‘Gentlemen Adventurers Discovering,—not trading!—the New World!’ ”

The company drank the toast with gusto and after an amusing description from the Chief of what they might expect to uncover in the bowels of the great city they broke up into small groups and drifted gradually out of doors into the still summer night and strolled about on the terrace within the shelter of the tall pines. The music from an excellent orchestra

could be heard, coming apparently from out of the trees and from the starry sky. For aerial transmission had been so perfected that sound could be sent around the earth and diffused at any spot in the atmosphere. It was not shot out of a tin horn or wooden cabinet like a cannonade! . . .

"Beethoven!" the old man exclaimed gratefully. "That's one achievement that we moderns have done little to improve upon for all our skill and technique in the matter of sound. To think that the greatest musical compositions are those produced by our ignorant and uncomfortable forebears! The last great music, to my taste, was written in the nineteenth Xian century, and the greatest of all by a deaf old man in the early years of that century. . . .

"Oh, I know we have invented instruments that he did not know; we have succeeded in mixing sounds as one does liquids in a number of new ingenious combinations, and have made music as we have our food and clothes from substances that in the old world nobody would have thought could be turned to such happy uses. We have strained the dissonances from our streets, made music out of the escaping gases of the blast furnace, and have trained the winds to blow not merely refreshingly but harmoniously around our dwellings. . . . But we have not written supremely great new music. . . . By the way, where is that symphony coming from?"

"From India, Hyderabad, I believe. They have a remarkably clever sound engineer there. It is played on a single instrument that is operated by sunlight and gives the effect of a full orchestra of ninety-odd pieces!"

"That is not nearly as remarkable to me as the fact that it was conceived and written by a man who heard its harmonies, its delicate variations solely in his imagination! . . . That fact by itself should convince us that civilization is nine-tenths spirit, not matter; that this actual world of phenomena and

experience can be created and recreated, changed and modified by the human mind in a million ways unknown to us—and not as these Americans seemed to think, solely through mechanical contrivances. Theirs was a child’s conception of existence, a multiplicity of toys to play with. And from what you have been telling me they had so many of these mechanical toys, so many buttons to press, so many levers to turn and engines to start and stop that their brains must have been continually drained of real creative energy as a child becomes exhausted from playing with too many toys. Which may account for the small amount of creative accomplishment either in the arts or in the social sciences that they achieved with all their technology and science. They were smothered under their own contrivances . . . and yet they were never half as comfortable with all their gear as we make ourselves. Their machines ran them while we run our machines!”

“Wait until you see some of the extraordinary things they made! You don’t know the half of what the Machine Age was!”

“No doubt! I am curious to see those devices that I have read about. But we shall never realize what the total effect was of that noisy, breathless, ugly existence for most of those people. Think what a day in the life of this great banker must have been, all the discords and worries that assailed him, protected and privileged as he was, and considered one of the most fortunate of mortals of his time!”

They became silent as the solemn chords of the great andante from the Fourth Symphony fell upon their ears. When the last note died like a sigh among the trees old Felix remarked,—

“We can’t do that with all our mastery of life! I wonder why not? And we don’t make any such masterpieces of sculp-

ture as the few we have that were done by the old Greeks, nor do I think we have any better poetry than certain passages written by the ancients. Certainly tragedy as the Greeks understood it is a lost art. Light comedies, yes, we have enough of them, but tragedy has gone from the world."

"By our mastery of the basic conditions of a harmonious and happy life we may have eliminated the experiences that furnished the individual creator with the stuff of tragedy. The best of the old tragedy, the Greek plays, depended upon a sense of the confused and arbitrary will of the gods. That was symbolic of fate, a conditioning and menacing state of mind that in one or another form beset the ancients always. While we have become fate itself largely: we are too completely masters of our lives to feel tragedy, perhaps."

"There are tragic choices still left us! You are still too young to have met them, no doubt. But we shall never extinguish wholly the causes of human tragedy. Sordid suffering and human degradation, yes, but the ancients knew that real tragedy was mental, not physical. . . . To return to my question, why is it that our achievements in the so-called creative arts are certainly less notable than our advance in the control of nature and the harmonious management of the art of living?"

"Just that! Our one great distinguishing art is the one most neglected by the ancients, even among the most privileged,—the art of living our lives. We are engaged in making a synthesis of all the elements that enter into living and weaving them into harmonious patterns for individual lives. To an intelligent American your life would seem like a long epic beautifully rounding to its conclusion!"

"Don't cut me off too soon—another canto or so, please!"

They laughed together at this sally.

"There is something in your contention," the old man re-

sumed, “that we are so much absorbed in life itself, in all its exciting possibilities unfolding every day, not merely enjoying them but striving to create fresh ones,—in short we moderns function so fully and so happily that we rarely feel the urge to go off by ourselves to make a single statue or write a little poem or compose a new piece of music, in order to ‘express ourselves,’ as these Americans used to say—they were forever trying to express themselves, especially their women,—and with all their striving they had so little to express!”

And again:

“Their art towards the end was an anodyne, a means of escaping from disagreeable realities. Think of all the spinsters and thwarted middle-aged men who took to making verses or daubing canvases in those final decades before the catastrophe. And those who did not make these feeble efforts to ‘create’ became ‘collectors’—like this banker—or critics and connoisseurs and talked unceasingly about ‘Art.’ Art became thus a method of escape from themselves, from a too pressing reality, and the duller and more drab their lives became the more desperate were their efforts to escape even momentarily, through alcohol and sex excitement and pretending, which was all that most of their art amounted to.”

“There may have been another urge that you have failed to consider,” someone observed, “one of the important motifs in all great art, too,—the desire to record experience, to make a reality more real than life itself. Whether he was conscious of it or not the great creator in all the arts was graving pictures of his age more significant and indelible than those of the professional historian or of the journalist. If it had not been for these ‘creators’ in the arts and their works, we moderns would have lost the key to much that is obscure in that dead world. It is just this recording power of art that one misses in these Americans. It exists if at all—at least negatively—in their

caricaturists and song writers and popular entertainers. In their ephemeral works we can, indirectly as it were through oblique mirrors, peer more or less intimately into the American soul!"

"And what of our own 'soul' as you call it, for I see you are using a term that had become a joke among the latter-day Americans?"

"Because I find no other term to express the thing I mean! . . . We are all soul, all spirit, all creative idea—at least so we should appear to them. That is why no single one of us feels the urge to separate himself from the rest, from life as a whole, and going off by himself into solitude set down in music or stone or by pen what life means to him or might be in order to satisfy his own peculiar inner requirements. . . . But when our great art comes into this modern world of ours it will be tremendous, probably unintelligible to such primitive beings as these old machine-ridden Americans,—all-embracing, illuminating, a synthesis of all that we are and feel. I seemed to divine what it might be in the grand pageant of Africa, that was given at Mountain College, shortly before I left Khartoum,—picture, music, mimicry, strange techniques of illusion and of representation, literal and allegorical,—everything!"

"Or like this Expedition into a forgotten continent!"

"Precisely . . . with all the momentous results it may have for the future of humanity. . . . But for a man of ninety-odd I am as usual talking too much. It is getting late and this lovely glade seems to be infested with a pestiferous insect that buzzes so loudly that it destroys the fine harmony of the music—besides biting, ugh!"

"That is the celebrated Long Island variety of mosquito—the insect that made outdoor life during four or five months of each year intolerable in most parts of America," the Chief explained. "Nobody yet has made a study of the influence of

the mosquito on American culture and temperament. Most interesting it would be. I fancy that the mosquito dictated more or less the distribution of the population on this continent. . . . These people made a heroic effort to save the world for what they called democracy, but exerted themselves very little to purge their own land of these pests. And we have been too much occupied hitherto to take final measures with the mosquito, but tomorrow I shall send for the chemical squad of the health division and set them at the problem. At least they can rid the immediate area of our operations and our dwelling places of this annoying and dangerous pest."

"Do that, dear man, without fail! Or you may inadvertently discover one of the causes of tragedy," the old man replied, sharply smacking his neck. "I wonder what old Morganbled did with the devils?"

"Probably, like you, he smacked and swore!"

Chapter Eight

TUNNELS, TOWERS, AND VAULTS

HOW about those hollow tunnels you wirelessly me of discovering when you first got here?" Felix asked with an ironical twinkle in his eye. It was just after sunrise the next morning, as he was mounting an airtaxi with the Chief of Operations to visit the excavations. "You thought then they might have something to do with the American system of military defenses or their religion I remember!"

The Chief replied a bit shamefacedly,—

"They were, as you supposed, merely their underground system of transportation. Later we found some of the rusty iron boxes they used stalled inside the tunnels, long trains of them in fact."

"Just as they so often were when in actual use," Felix remarked. "Anybody as familiar as I am with their records knows that the usual form of getting about these vast hives as they grew in population and took in surrounding territories was being shot or rather hauled through miles of endless subterranean tunnels. These people developed a molelike habit of burrowing underground just as they got a cretin habit of elongating their structures into the sky above. They were not content with the surface of the earth which in such centers as this became too costly for the ordinary man to own. Some of their inhabitants rarely saw any direct sunlight except on rare holidays, which were usually spent in a comatose state of inertia. . . . This curious tunneling habit of underground ex-

istence must have had a marked influence on their health and their mentality.”

“Well, you shall have a taste of it! We have cleared out one of their main ‘tubes’ as they called them for its entire length, hauled out the old metal boxes, patched them up so that they run, and installed new motors. One of the delights I have planned for you this fine day is a trip through this ‘Subway.’ I hope you will like it!”

“I shan’t mind trying it once in a lifetime as a new experience, although at my age I should not care for it as a daily practice, like many millions of unfortunate Americans who used daily to spend several precious hours of their short lives in one of these dark and noisy holes breathing the foul air breathed over and over by the millions of their fellow victims, with only artificial light and that not of the best. . . . The fondness of these old Americans for burrowing and living underground was one of their less explicable habits!”

“It saved time in getting about, as an adequate air service had not been developed and the highways were intolerably crowded with their evil smelling vehicles.”

“Saved time!” the old man snorted. “For what? Those old fellows were always trying to ‘save time,’ but it is difficult to find what they did that was either useful or agreeable with their saved minutes and hours. The daily life of a dweller in this great city was one prolonged effort to get somewhere in less time than it could be done!”

“It was the existence of those immense towered buildings that made tunnel transportation for the millions necessary.”

“Of course! But why the towers themselves? Why the perpetual effort to squeeze more millions of human beings and their activities into just this narrow strip of rocky land? Across the river and harbor there was ample space for an orderly growth. . . . No, I believe they liked to burrow and to hive

and herd, to sleep one layer on top of another, and to scurry from burrow to burrow through your tunnels, to shoot up and down their cliff dwellings in swift cages (which must have given them strange sensations). Not even their huge high-powered motor-cars could make any considerable speed through the crowded narrow streets. This 'rapid transit' as they called it gave them a sense of activity, exhausting as it must have been, and that I gather was the state of mind most agreeable to the American male or female,—a sense of being moved somewhere rapidly about some business no matter what. Even their idle beggars liked to get inside one of the boxes and ride all day long back and forth!

"There was another more sordid reason for their herding: so many small groups of the controlling and owning classes made something out of it,—first of all the bankers and the capitalists who provided the money for erecting these immense hives, then the speculators in real estate, for land values were incredibly increased, thousands of times, by the inculcation of the herding habit. Think what it meant when seven or eight millions of human beings were struggling to get within the same few miles of space! Then there was the group of profiteers who bought up adjacent lands when the building of a new tube was decided upon whose advent, of course, greatly increased land values far out into the adjacent country."

"How unfair!"

"There was not much regard for justice under the régime of rugged individualism," Felix retorted dryly. "Each fellow and each group for himself and the devil take the hindmost."

"Yet there was a government of a sort to look out for the interests of all."

"Their government! It was the worst plunderer of all. Composed of representatives of the capitalist syndicates and the

real estate groups: they took the graft as they called it at every stage of the 'development' process."

"The common citizens who had to use these tunnels, who were obliged to ride in them to their work in the city hives, had they no rights in the matter?"

"Less than they might have had, had they cared to exert their mass power. But their revolts at the treatment they received were always centered on petty details like the amount of the fare they must pay for the privilege of being packed like lumber into one of the little boxes, often hanging by a strap from the roof, in the most indecent promiscuity you can imagine. . . . You see I had the rapid transit system looked into when your first message arrived at Khartoum, for I suspected what your tunnels were—and I found a library full of books on the subject, it was of so much concern to these New Yorkers. They were forever building new tunnels, which only made the congested situation worse. . . . The 'people,' poor deluded semi-asphyxiated fools, they never murmured except when there was a threat of raising the fare from one to two obols per ride. They didn't realize what it meant in taxes to be paid by them ultimately or in their health and the waste of precious life which might have been spent so much more pleasantly in the open air. They were used to an existence of herding and hiving, to breathing vitiated air and to bad electric light. . . . No doubt the great banker whose country home you have so delightfully converted to my use was one of the beneficiaries of the system, though of course he never got into a subway in his life, nor any other of his class if it could be helped." . . .

The little airtaxi, meanwhile, having shot up above the tips of the tall pines surrounding the banker's house, floated like a child's big balloon (colored in stripes like such a toy) above the forest of Long Island in the warm air of a June morning. At a distance could be seen the gleaming line of surf breaking

on a distant beach, and ahead of them stretched the dumpling like green hillocks which marked the site of the ancient city of New York. Felix looked over the landscape with keen interest and drew into his lungs savoringly deep breaths of the warm air, which was fragrant with sea ozone and resinous pine.

"As good a combination as any we get at home," he commented, "fresh from nature's own laboratory."

"The atmosphere here is I have noticed as a rule more stimulating than that in many parts of our world. My men seem to like it; they can work longer hours without feeling fatigue. It gives one more of a push. We must have it analyzed and discover just what that springy quality of the air comes from. We might be able to introduce it at Khartoum."

"Oh, don't bring the American atmosphere back with you," protested the old man. "Let old Africa alone. Don't try speeding it up by atmospheric stimulation. The exciting air here undoubtedly had something to do with the terrible American temperament, which urged these people to be always doing something, no matter how unimportant what they did was, a sort of excitability of the nerves which their minds must pay for. They were the people that first developed the last one of the great plagues that tortured humanity, neurasthenia. Their books are full of it and strange ways of combating it. Only a very robust or phlegmatic temperament, constantly exercised in the open air like the early pioneers, could live in the American climate without suffering from overstimulation. And to this 'peppy' climate, as they called it in their curious special language, they added raw stimulants in the form of gin and whiskey and occasionally cocaine, as well as tea and coffee, so that the average American man and woman of all classes lived in a state of overexcitation from synthetic stimulants, which left him like a mud flat at low tide once the effect wore off.

. . . No, let our air remain as nature made it. We don't want to breed American go-getters in Khartoum."

The Chief laughed at the old man's vehemence.

"All the same," he observed, "we are inoculating some thousands of young men to the intoxicating effect of the American climate, and they seem to like it so far. And we haven't yet had to provide sanitariums for them to rest in."

"You will, also quack psychological disciplines, to get them out of their delusions!"

"Our men tell me that they never lived where it was so pleasant to work and they are always asking leaves to make excursions into the back country. Our subsidiary expeditions into distant parts of North America, the few we have sent out so far, are clamorously applied for so that we have to give out the posts as special rewards for diligent accomplishment here."

"Look out or they will get the week-end habit," the old man advised. "What is that big ditch below?"

Just then the airtaxi was circling over a broad transverse excavation that reached from the northern tip of the ancient city westwards to the edge of the estuary once called the Hudson River. It followed closely the line of smooth green depression that had once evidently been a river bed. About the wide cut a large number of workers were controlling the big air-hose with which the *débris* was being removed.

"It was my idea to cut right across the old island at this point where so many of their communication tunnels emerged from the hillside and thus tap the city from beneath so to speak," the Chief explained. "In this way we can open up the old ant hill without having to remove so much rubbish."

"Make a cross-section of the house of moles!"

"Incidentally we are finding a lot of characteristic detail of their civilization. They were remarkable for one kind of engineering, what you might call domestic engineering: they were

keen about sewers, water mains, gas and electricity conductors, and all that, everything that contributed to what they thought was 'comfort,' like the bathtub and devices for roasting the air within their dwellings to an intolerable temperature or cooling it in hot weather. We tap all these devices at once in this way and won't have to bother with investigating them separately afterwards. We cut at once as it were into the heart of this old civilization."

"I should rather call it the stomach or the alimentary canal," the old man chaffed.

"The bowels then! . . . From my crosscut we will enter immediately the great gut of the ancient city! . . . From here we can go pretty much where we like, for the tunnels divide and cross each other and ramify under the whole of the island, even down to the huge vaults at the other end of the city where they kept their gods locked up within a most ingenious system of steel walls and electrified chambers. . . . So if you feel up to it and don't mind spending this lovely summer day in the bowels of old New York I can show you a good part of the 'works' as they used to say, at least the strategic places. It is more or less like a worm entering the foot of a man and making his way upwards to the mouth and eyes. This is the foot of our dead colossus!"

"One might do more agreeable things on this glorious sunny day, but as this is what we are here for let us plunge into the abyss. . . . Do you remember the ancient myth of Jonah and the Whale? We are Jonah, and fortunately our whale is dead and buried."

"We have hitched up some of their old iron boxes so that we can ride to different points, stopping as we care to inspect anything. . . . This way, sir!"

They descended to the bottom of the cut. The workmen who came and went in organized companies like soldiers engaged

in making some huge tapestry picture were singing, laughing, often larking while they waited to make connections with assisting labor units. The old man stopped to observe them much as an old schoolmaster might linger to watch the activities of the playground, with warm memories of former days spent there, both as pupil and as master.

"They seem to be having a good time," he remarked genially.

"Our boys? Of course! It is the greatest lark of their lives, and they know it, as it was with some of the soldiers in the World War—until they got into the thick of the stench and the slaughter. Luckily there will be no stench or slaughter to our party, just one long adventure."

"Sometimes I think," the old man mused, "that the one greatest accomplishment of our modern society is that we have transformed labor into sport. Instead of a curse to which man was born we have made all forms of labor as simple and natural and enjoyable as eating or sleeping. We have accomplished that by our efforts to adjust the job to the individual rather than the individual to the job as these older societies did, crushing every kind of person on a Procrustean bed of enforced labor. We have divided up the work fairly and not let anybody work too much and have removed that terrible sense of being driven by the fear of destitution.

"If you have read the accounts of the great depression of 1930, old style, when millions of human beings could find no paid work and sometimes starved on the streets or in their miserable cold rooms—often killed themselves through despair—while others no better or more deserving than they had sufficient or too much, you will understand my enthusiasm for our way of doing things. Whenever I get the least discouraged with our results I take down certain volumes and read of the tremendous starvation parties their old economy used to stage periodically, calling them 'the business cycle' or the 'hand of

God,' and say to myself,—'At least we have taken the curse and the degradation from labor, which is a necessary condition of life on this earth!'"

The youths in the labor gangs looked up with curiosity as their Chief and the old man picked their way across the uneven ground of the excavation. Modern good manners permitted anybody to address anybody, no matter what their respective situations happened to be, provided there was a reason for doing so. Several of the foremen spoke to the Chief of Operations; the boyish laborers merely smiled good-naturedly as the two leaders passed them. It would have been a breach of good manners to thrust themselves on their attention without any excuse. Occasionally old Felix stopped to ask a question, to joke with one of the lads. One held up a dirty grayish mass for his inspection.

"That's what they used to blow up things with!"

"Dynamite! That meant as much as gold or food to them, something destructive. . . . Well, my boy, let us be thankful that we have got beyond the dynamite age."

The boy squashed the grayish substance with his foot.

"Tons on tons of it we've found." . . .

The Chief pointed to various twisted corrugated pipes whose ends emerged in the cut, with the brief comment,—“Gas, electricity, communication wires, and steam for heating purposes. The earth beneath these old cities was honeycombed with a maze of wires and pipes. . . . We save ourselves a lot of trouble by using air waves for such things.”

“Our system wouldn't have satisfied their bankers, for it isn't possible to get a monopoly of the air and that was the way their society was run, exclusive rights in necessities for the benefit of the few at the cost of the many! Follow one of these wires or pipes or rails and you would come to a banker's office.”

After a cursory examination of the sewage and water systems of the great city they entered the opening for the underground railway, a gaping hollow in a breast of rock. Felix, who was obviously more bored than interested in the mechanical devices, proofs of the technical ingenuity of the Machine Age, listened indifferently to the engineer's explanation of the long tunnel. What he saw was an endless bore dimly lighted at intervals for the convenience of the workers in it, its sides lined with crumbling tiles of a monotonous and uninteresting pattern, the round walls converging like a sharpened pencil in the distance. Presently they came to one of the former stopping places where a conveyance awaited them improvised ingeniously from the relics discovered throughout the tunnels and adjoining yards.

Necessarily almost everything in the vehicles and motors had had to be renewed in order to make the toy serviceable. This had been done by a detail of the archæological and engineering departments whose head man was running the train that would take Felix and the Chief through the maze of underground roadways beneath the silent city. This young man was obviously greatly pleased with his success in making the old contraption go, and must explain it in detail, showing photographs of the original trains to prove how faithfully he had reproduced what in the last decades of the Xian era had conveyed millions of workers on their errands through these underground tubes. The old man listened with an indulgent smile and then stepped into one of the elongated metal boxes. The thing began to move forward with a frightful shriek and scrunching and clangor of iron on iron. As it gained speed the lights in the box burned more dimly, the box itself swayed sickeningly as it took the curves, the air soon became suffocatingly hot and stale. The old man sat like a Stoic enduring torture, stuffing his fingers into his ears in an effort to deaden

the intolerable noise. He looked into the Chief's smiling face in mute appeal,—‘How long must I endure this?’ For it was impossible to speak intelligibly even if one shrieked because of the clanking reverberations of the hollow tunnel. When at last the train slowed and with thumps and bumps that threw the passengers to and fro came to a halt at a platform, the old man murmured,—

“Is it any wonder that so many people in those days were neurasthenic and given to horrible crimes? After such an experience as that lasting an hour or more every morning and evening, one might easily kill his grandmother!”

“Oh, you don't know the half,” his companion scoffed. “You have a seat and nobody squeezing you to jelly and blowing foul diseased breath into your face. One almost never sat down in these boxes which were jammed to the roof with sweaty evil-smelling humanity. Almost everybody clung to a strap suspended from the roof and swayed like cattle, while at every station guards pushed and shoved more waiting passengers into the already crowded vehicle until flesh and bone could hardly stand it. . . . No, you don't realize what those people suffered in their desire for ‘rapid transit’ as they called it!”

“What was up above on top of these tunnels?” Felix inquired in a small voice.

“Thousands upon thousands of huge square apartment boxes—communal dwellings of twenty, thirty, forty or more layers cut up into separate small sections where the people lived when they were not working, where their women stayed and had children, although the child-bearing habit had almost gone out before the end.”

“I should think it might have! Who would want to bring more human beings into such a world, with such an existence before them? It would be a crime.”

“I see that our driver is giving you a more realistic perform-

ance than he intended of the working of this infernal machine. The current that operates the train seems to have been turned off. Fortunately we are stalled at an exit and if you don't mind scrambling up a few stories we might take a look around and see what the homes of the comfortable New Yorkers were like. One specimen will do for they were all much the same, except for trivial variations in the disposition of spaces. . . .

"This, now, was the lobby of a rich residential hotel for persons of the upper middling sort, small financiers, business executives and the like. This form of communal living became increasingly popular as the women who had once been domestic slaves maintaining individual homes by their labor, rebelled and made use of the technical ingenuity of the age to evade every kind of task involved in the home. Those who were not rich enough to keep private slaves—or too lazy to supervise them—lived in one of the more or less luxurious public residences. . . . I infer from the arrangement of the first floor and the hollows where their elevators ran, winding people from floor to floor, that this was one of the kind."

Old Felix peered about him in the gloom of the partially excavated interior. The steel girders stripped of their original coverings rose gaunt and bare in an interminable series of floors. . . .

"Very little is left of all the works of these people, except steel and mud (which they called 'cement' and made in enormous quantities). That is the one fact that has overwhelmed me since I landed yesterday in the midst of this ancient Babylon! How could such an energetic and populous race as these Americans undoubtedly were have left behind them so few evidences of interesting activities or of beautiful creations? Why, I have stood among the remains of some little Greek town in Asia Minor, at least twice as remote from us in time as these people, and been moved to tears by the plain evidences

of interesting lives once led there with at least a faint glimmering of the glorious possibilities of living. But here I find nothing but old cables and steel beams and tunnels and sewer pipes. . . . No, I don't care about clambering up those long flights of steps to look at their individual cubbyholes. I will take your word for it!"

"Nothing really worth the effort," the Chief admitted, "although our archæologists are drawing some ingenious inferences about the mental and moral characteristics of these machined Americans from the examination of different types of their cave dwellings. There are almost no art remains of any value except a few rare specimens stolen or bought from Europe. Most of their so-called art was mere imitation. Like monkeys or the Japanese, the ancient Americans could imitate anything they saw. It was the land of 'just as good as'! Their very rich imitated something they had seen in Europe; the lesser rich imitated them; and the less rich these other, on down the economic scale until the populace rejoiced in a lot of flimsy 'just as good as' imitations. . . . A queer lot of people! . . .

"We may do them some injustice, because a thousand years of natural decay are terribly destructive to most materials, although this particular area escaped the full rigors of the glacial period. Yet in the first rough examination we have had time to make we have found so few utensils that have any charm to them, such as you found in abundance in Asia Minor even after the sites had been robbed and pawed over by a score of succeeding civilizations. . . . Even in their massive safes where for safe-keeping they interred most of the things they valued greatly we have found so far masses of paper, metal, coins, and a few bits of rather childish jewelry, such as might have interested an ancient African tribe."

They poked around in the débris while water trickled down-

wards through the upper stories. It was a melancholy place on a bright June morning and presently the two descended once more to the 'subway' where their train was still stalled. The engineer had had word that the current would soon be turned on, and so the two men walked up and down on the narrow bench beside the train. Felix who was still musing over what he had seen observed,—

"I wonder just why the inhabitants of this part of the North American continent should have disappeared so rapidly in face of the altering conditions of the climate. As long as they could get coal or oil to feed their furnaces they might have hung on here near the seacoast. Of course there must have been an increasing difficulty in finding food—and a week's interruption of their food supply would have finished them. For they had not yet discovered our modern methods of food concentrates and preservation of essential food elements."

"It must have been the shortage of food, as you say, which destroyed them in the end rather than the cold or the increasing disorder of their social machinery. From various indications I have seen this huge hive was largely abandoned before any considerable advance of the Ice Cap, and while the rest of the country was still inhabited. It may have begun just after the great Asian war that finished the disruption of the existing world economy. . . . These dwellers in New York probably began gradually to desert their huge warren, running off in detachments into the country in search of food, so that these huge buildings began to deteriorate before some of them had been really completed. You know that many of the citizens were too poor to pay the high taxes imposed, and their cities themselves became bankrupt and discharged their police and their firefighters—"

"The teachers first of all!" the old man interpolated dryly. "They had already dispensed very largely with their priests."

“Bandits and armed marauders already had begun to run riot in fast cars, as we know from their own accounts, firing indiscriminately upon their prey. The rich hired some of these private assassins—as well as the former soldiers whom they had subsidized at the public expense for this purpose—for the protection of their personal property and the lives of their children.

“This civic chaos must have been advancing for some time before the abandonment of the city, but the records of this period, their newspapers and magazines, tell us little because there was a conspiracy of silence about these alarming symptoms, encouraged by the government and the privileged class in the strange conviction that if they did not admit the conditions that were fast overwhelming their society the trouble would somehow mysteriously disappear. So they published only cheerful or inane items of news or deliberate misrepresentations of events, attributing every occasion of disorder to the machinations of Russian communists. All else printed was what was called ‘constructive news.’ This ostrichlike habit of pretending what was disagreeable to them to think of did not exist was deep in the character of the American people: in fact it was the basis of their most popular religious faith, which they called Christian Science, it being neither Christian nor scientific!

“Incidentally we have already come across dozens of the temples of this faith in different parts of the city, most substantial structures, and all built recently. It seems that it was the only kind of temple that the American business man ever entered in large numbers, because in their happy disbelief in the unpleasant he felt that he ‘got something’ as he would say. . . . In short we know very little about this period of decline, except that it was startlingly swift, catastrophic, once it had set in, and must have caused frightful misery to millions on

millions of human beings, compared with which the brutalities and ferocities of the Great War must have seemed merciful."

The old man sighed at the picture of such colossal and needless human misery.

"Show me how the poorer classes of citizens lived—there must have been many millions of them!" he demanded, as they once more resumed their places in the train which was now ready to move on.

"Oh, they were squeezed into every corner of the city: only the very rich and the very poor could afford to live in old New York! . . . But first we'll have a look at their biggest, most ambitious temple, what they called a 'cathedral,' perched on a rocky eminence near their biggest educational factory. This temple was built of stone, or rather covered with a stone skin, and so has suffered rather less deterioration than most of their structures. Enough remains to give you an idea of its grandiose design and the sterility of its conception. It is a remarkable evidence of the exhaustion of the original impulse in their religion. Built at a prodigal expense of money, many millions of dollars having been lavished on its construction by extremely rich citizens, who had faith not in the teachings of Christ but in the efficacy of an organized religion in maintaining the form of society from which they chiefly benefited—a kind of social insurance—it does not express a single creative idea. . . . Here we are!"

As they emerged into blinding sunlight from the dark tunnel the old man drew in deep breaths of the invigorating air and for some time contemplated silently the lofty arches of the ruin before him, which rose starkly among the low mounds that crowned this height of the ancient city. These columns which were symmetrically grouped at one end in the form of an ellipse resembled somewhat the semicircles of weather-beaten gray stones on the western shores of Europe,

indicating bluntly a human purpose in their design, whose meaning had long since vanished.

"A clumsy imitation of those great temples in Northern France," Felix commented.

"They were uncertain about the design they should copy, it would seem," the Chief added. "They began with one model and switched some time later to another. They had no original impulse in making religious edifices, merely followed a convention! These later Americans were at home in their 'skyscrapers' as they called the cliff buildings, but not in churches. Latterly they took to incorporating churches in the skyscrapers, renting the space not used by the sacred edifice for business. Thus instead of casting the money-changers out of their temples they drew rent from them! Which accords well with their practical nature."

"They had no vital beliefs, except in the sacredness of individual ownership of property. There was nothing else they would have gone to the stake for. . . . But it is noteworthy how long dead religious forms persisted, as in this expensive grandiose building. . . . It takes time, hundreds of years, to grow a strong religion, and a long time for a rooted religion to decay. These Americans whose daily lives proved how little their Christianity meant to them were sincerely scandalized when the new Russian state used harsh measures to rid the country of a peculiarly debased form of superstition that had for a long time hampered the growth of the people. Americans held meetings and addressed heated protests to the world and spread mean lies about what the Russians had done to their priests. . . .

"The head priest of this pretentious edifice, I believe, was most active and vocal in that protest. He was an ambitious ecclesiastic of little religious feeling himself, a skillful politician rather than priest. He was known for his success in

tapping the springs of wealth with which to build this 'cathedral' and in his rigidity against marriage of divorced persons. He believed it was more acceptable to his God to have unhappy men and women live in adultery rather than to remate. . . . But even in those non-believing days there were a few devoted Christians, just as there were a few real scholars and a few self-sacrificing teachers in the enormous educational hippodrome farther out on this hillside, whose remains probably make those humps in the landscape over yonder. . . . Well, we need not waste more time on their temples: they themselves did not waste much time in them while they were alive. Let us get on to something that the people of that day really did believe in!"

"We should have to go straight through, then, to their banks and stock market," the Chief laughed. "Those are situated at the extreme end of the city. On our way thither we might as well have a few glimpses of their civilization. One place I especially want you to see, the huge hillock which is all that is left of what they called 'Radio City.' . . . First, however, we'll shift over to the East Side and see how the nine-tenths of the population who were poor lived; then if you feel like a stroll this fine morning we'll wander across their Central Park and through their more fashionable quarters to the site of Radio City."

"Wherever you like," the old man agreed resignedly.

"Nothing," said the old Greek after they had emerged from one of the squalid boxes where the poorer sort of citizen once lived in New York, "is more characteristic of the barbarous Christian era than the savage separation of rich from poor, not simply in the physical conditions of their lives, but in the conviction that the luckier, more privileged persons had of the innate inferiority of the vast majority stricken with the

curse of poverty. It was accepted as self-evident proof of an inferiority, mental and moral. Even their equalitarian religion accepted as fact this deep abyss between those who had and those who had not.

“‘The poor you will always have with you,’ their Teacher is reported to have said, thereby consecrating this structural division of human society. It was a common assumption that while the labor of the masses was essential to the fulfillments of the few that labor was fated to be performed by creatures of an inferior breed, frankly recognized as semi-morons, and society prided itself on its munificent charities to these dependents. Having called these miserable beings into existence to tend their machines for them, a labor that gradually reduced the laborers to a state of anæmia, those happy few whose fate relieved them from the curse of want invented the preposterous theory of the inevitability of poverty and the consequent innate inferiority of more than four-fifths of humanity, and did nothing seriously to improve the conditions that created these semi-slaves. It had always been thus, they held, from the beginning of the world, and always must be so until the end, ‘Human Nature Being as It Is,’ as they said.

“Of course, the assumption of an innate inferiority of one human being to another, even of the most wretched to the most prosperous, was refuted in many instances. In fact, the more intelligent among the privileged consoled themselves for the glaring inequalities and injustices of their social system by pointing to the opportunities for self-improvement open to the poorest. The idea of these kindly apologists was that this best of all possible worlds provided a sort of gladiatorial arena where the strongest and the ablest survived (together with their parasites) while from the squirming fetid mass of ‘inferiors’ rose candidates for ‘success,’ which they called ‘survival of the fittest.’ A vile mockery of words! When driven into a

logical impasse the defenders of the existing régime invariably took refuge in some form of supernaturalism: it was always God who called the rich and powerful to their comfortable seats at life's table and assigned the crumbs to the poor! . . . Ah, well, it is surprising that they did not cause more revolutions,—that the dispossessed masses did not rise oftener in their fury to sack the homes of the rich and to enjoy a riot if not to succeed in changing their estate.”

“You overlook the specious doctrine that was dinned into every little Xian robot, that if he was cunning enough and enterprising enough he too might become a slave-owner and live at his ease!”

“The impossibility of breaking through class inhibitions must have been obvious to the millions caught in the coil of their machines, any more than in winning a lucky number in a lottery, although no doubt the chance lured them on. . . . But what especially amazes me is the fact that so many well-intentioned and generous persons among their leaders really believed in this abysmal superstition of the innate inferiority of the unsuccessful. So carelessly bred was the average human being of that day, less carefully than their dogs or pigs in fact, that it made little difference whether one was born in a kennel like that we just saw on the East Side or in one of these grand houses of their Fifth Avenue.”

Felix waved a hand vaguely over the open landscape of the Park through whose wooded reaches they were now passing. . . .

“Exchange the environments and the resultant human beings would have approximately fulfilled each other's destiny in the same manner. Do you recall the celebrated case of the Banker's Baby, who was stolen by bandits towards the end of the Xian era in this same New York? The abduction made an immense sensation at the time, for although the habit of

stealing the children of the wealthy and holding them for ransom had gone so far in this decaying society that over a thousand instances of this atrocious crime had occurred in the country that same year—yet this banker being very well known and something of a national figure, the capture of his only child, a boy less than two years old stolen right here where we walk within sight of his nurse, created an immense sensation. For days and weeks their huge newspapers, neglecting international squabbles and the endless schemes of politicians, were filled with sensational accounts of the efforts being made by its distracted parents to recover the stolen child.

“The authorities being as usual ineffective, the wretched father was forced to deal directly with representatives of the criminal class that had, as in all decadent periods, risen to power. A pall of secrecy settled down, as in national diplomacy when some dirty affair is being ‘arranged’ and the diplomats have not yet settled on the best formula in which to sugarcoat it for the public. . . .

“Finally, a month or more after the abduction, it was announced through the press that the banker had recovered his infant son and had hidden him in some remote Caribbean island where among the semi-civilized negroes he thought he had a better chance of keeping him than under the government of his own country. It was generally rumored that the banker had been obliged to pay an enormous sum, ten million dollars in gold, for the ransom of his child, and it was held to be greatly to his credit that he had not bargained with the rascals who sold back to him his own flesh and blood. (As a matter of fact even that large sum was but a drop in the full pot of the banker’s private fortune, mostly acquired in financing the recent war; doubtless by putting on a little pressure at the right time he recovered all he had been obliged to disgorge.) . . .

“Well, time passed, and the baby grew up, returned to New York (surrounded by a cordon of hired detectives as had become customary in his class), went to a university and played polo, married and divorced two or three times,—in short did all the foolish things that a young man of his class was expected to do. He was nicknamed ‘the Stolen Baby’ and became well known, as an amiable and harmless man of wealth. He did not enter his father’s business because as it was said his health was too delicate. The real reason was that he was not very intelligent and his banker father probably considered that the family estate would be safer in the hands of some large trust company. . . .

“Now I am not telling you this old newspaper yarn for nothing. You perhaps recall the story as it was such a typical and sensational case that the school histories even mention it. It was after the rape of the banker’s baby that the very rich Americans took to hiring thugs to protect themselves, which became in a brief time one of the contributing causes of social disintegration. But why I am repeating this old yarn is because not long ago I discovered in one of the neglected bundles of manuscripts gathered out of some European archives a small pamphlet written by an obscure citizen of Detroit, just before the final collapse of these U.S.A. (in the year 1941 to be exact) in which was related in circumstantial detail the true story of the abduction of the banker’s baby. It was quite different from what had been given to the public, and even more bizarre, and I may add it bears every mark of probability.

“It seems that the plan to kidnap the banker’s child was not a premeditated plot of ‘foreign scum’ as had been generally believed, it being the habit then to attribute every brutal crime to that part of the population that had no Anglo-Saxon ancestors. It was the impulsive act of one of the numerous

dependents in the banker's household, a sort of confidential secretary, a young woman who had incurred the enmity of her employer's wife, probably from the usual cause. Knowing that she had lost her position she meditated revenge. Indeed this young woman had no intention of either demanding a ransom or of permanently keeping the child. She merely wanted, to use her own language as reported in the pamphlet, 'to throw a scare into the Madam,' who had been rather haughty with her on the discovery of her double relation to the banker. She had another lover, somebody also employed by the banker, and the couple, 'at a little drinking party in his room,' concocted the kidnapping and carried it out the next afternoon. The lover owned one of those clumsy gas-cars that even the humblest citizen then had at his disposal, and in this the baby (decoyed from its nurse by the ex-secretary in this very Park) was whisked out of the city. Early morning found the pair with the baby in one of those great forest preserves maintained by rich families in the wilder parts of the state. The man who knew the locality having often accompanied his employer thither took the woman and child to a small lodge, which was closed for the winter, and established them there comfortably enough, while he returned the following night to his lodging in the city.

"There to his amazement and fright he discovered that the capture of the banker's baby had become in a single day an enormous sensation and the banker's home was filled with detectives while he himself was followed by them as well as by newspaper men and camera men, in the customary style. He did not dare to return to the mountain lodge nor communicate in any way with the parents of the stolen child as had been the ill-conceived plan of the abductors. The temper of the mob was such that it would have cost him his life,

and he was kept busy accounting to the detectives for his absence the preceding night and day.

“So as he expressed it he ‘sat tight’ (no doubt wishing he had never agreed to the scheme designed by his accomplice), and after a few days had passed and the scrutiny upon his actions relaxed he found an opportunity to get word to his confederate of the situation and of the heavy risk they would run in trying to communicate with the banker. He counseled her either to get away with the child or leave it in the lodge and notify the police of its presence there: in a word he handed the mess over to the young woman. She, however, did not follow her lover’s recommendations, being it would seem of stouter stuff than the man. She sent word by mail to the father of the child that his baby was well and receiving the best of care, and then dressing herself in some youth’s clothes she found in the lodge made her way after a time to a relative in Detroit, with the baby.

“The alarm did not die down, rather increased, and with the racket in the newspapers and among the police the danger of communicating in any way with the banker or his agents was very great. Moreover, another element entered at this juncture: the young abductress had become fond of the baby and did not want to part with it! But her sister urging her all the time to dispose somehow of the baby and threatening to put her and the brat out of doors, the young woman at last confessed whose the baby was and suggested to the sister, who had several children of her own and one of approximately the same age as the little James Jefferson, Jr., to exchange the babies and fob off the sister’s child upon the banker and his wife, with an idea of ultimately reopening the question and obtaining further ransom. . . .

“In the end that is just what they did, the man accomplice making the bargain through an acquaintance in what was

called 'the underworld.' He got for the spurious stolen child nothing like what was rumored to have been the ransom—the banker also had his go-betweens in the underworld!—and whatever he did receive after paying his agent he appropriated, leaving for Mexico with another woman instead of going to Detroit and marrying his accomplice as she had confidently expected him to do. So the young secretary got nothing out of her risky attempt except the child to which she seems to have been greatly attached. She clung to it and refused to reopen negotiations with its parents as the sister constantly urged her to do.

“The story runs, in brief, that she lived on in Detroit having found some employment in the office of one of the great automobile plants, bringing up the banker’s child as her own. Fortunately her sister died and nobody else knew anything about the child’s parentage. The boy grew up and went to school, then at eighteen entered a factory as one of those skilled robots tied to the endless moving platform of machine industry, neither more nor less so far as anybody could tell than any other of the millions of robots employed in this efficient center of the Machine Age. The woman could not refrain from hinting from time to time to the youth of some mystery about his father. Although she called herself ‘Mrs. Delafield’ and wore a wedding ring, the youth knew that she had not been married to his father and teased her to reveal to him who that father was. Although she admitted that this unknown father was somebody of exalted position in the American world she shrank from confessing the whole truth for fear of losing the child as she had already lost her accomplice.

“So matters went on for nearly thirty years. Before she died, however, she told the young man the whole story and at his insistence even wrote to the banker, recalling herself to him and offering to clear up the mystery of his child’s abduction.

The banker was now an old man, and although his supposed son had not turned out to be either brilliant or a comfort in any way, he was nevertheless no worse than the average rich man's son and the banker had grown used to him and his defects. Moreover, the banker, like every man of his class, was the object of so many interested 'pressures' and attempts at blackmail from women and others that he was inclined to discredit 'Mrs. Delafield's' tale altogether, no longer recollecting the ephemeral intimacy he had once had with her, as with so many other young women of her class, in the misty past. (His wife be it said was no longer living to remind him of the event!) To the old banker the affair with the young secretary, the kidnapping of the child, and the ransom paid were all matters closed, and he saw no reason for reopening them. Thus the woman's efforts to get money for her adopted son failed wholly.

"Presently after her death the son found among her papers the chapters of this pamphlet relating with complete circumstantiality his abduction and the part played by the accomplice and the man's acknowledgment of complicity, positive proof of what the woman had vaguely hinted at. Soon the young man, his imagination fired by the chance to step into a fortune and thus escape from his robot existence in the automobile plant, threw up his job and went to New York. But he never saw his father, who was then quite ill and soon after died without having set eyes on his own son. The young mechanic attempted to enforce his claim upon the executors of the banker's estate, a powerful trust company, but the trust company's lawyers refused even to buy him off and he lacked the means to prosecute a suit in the courts for his inheritance.

"In revenge he published this shabby little pamphlet, revealing completely the true facts of the once celebrated case discussed in every part of the civilized world, incidentally dis-

honoring the woman who had cherished him all these years. But thirty years had elapsed since the abduction: nobody was interested any longer in who was actually the Stolen Baby. Few even saw the pamphlet. I came across it as I told you, by mere chance. How it ever got into that bundle of manuscripts is beyond my imagination. Perhaps the young man thwarted in his ambition of becoming the rich banker's heir took to a roving life and brought the pamphlet with him into Africa; perhaps some other curious person like myself, fond of the hidden corners of history, those unimportant details that often indicate social currents more clearly than so-called 'momentous' events, treasured this private revelation, knowing it to be what I am sure it is, authentic. . . .

"There are a number of interesting angles to what was at that period a commonplace story of abduction of a rich man's child. But the angle from which I began the tale is that of the complete identification of both of the two youths involved, though from such different strata of society, in their determined environments. So far as we can tell each would have played the other's part substantially the same, although one was flesh and bone of people with every kind of contemporary privilege, while the other was from the common run of the working class, from one of whose dreary habitations we have just emerged! Such incidents which were plentiful enough in those old days should have convinced the arrogant possessors of wealth and privilege that there was nothing more divine in their overlordship than in that of ancient kings and princes, even less, for the old rulers of the world had usually fought for their elevated posts with their own fists, not stolen their wealth by mean cunning! . . . Well, where are we bound for from here, as this breezy American folk used to say?"

The Chief of Operations laughed appreciatively over the old man's whimsical tale, which was of the kind that had made

him famous to so many generations of youth because from a neglected and apparently insignificant source he illuminated the immense human past with which he was of all contemporary men most familiar.

"I mean to wind up our day in the very heart of the City where its pulse used to beat most fiercely, the pulse that animated most of this people. But first we must have a look at the ruins of Radio City."

Hastening their pace southwards through the agreeable forest of the old Central Park, the Chief began the story of the Rockpile fortune and of Amusement City.

"You know all about the Rockpiles, father and son, and how the older R. made his colossal fortune, probably the single largest aggregation of private wealth the world has ever known? The story of that Rockpile fortune is far more than the usual vulgar tale of acquisitiveness and the stupidities of the rich. It is a vastly significant chapter in American civilization. He did no worse things in amassing his fortune than many men of that day did, only he did them more efficiently, and with better luck. The government struggled with him and finally in the effort to curb his rapacities dissolved his gigantic company, which at the time was hailed as a triumph for democracy—for the little man! It turned out to be anything but that, for each of the segments into which the courts had divided the Rockpile company began to produce much more wealth than before. It was as if you cut up a giant snake into twenty or thirty pieces and each piece instead of dying suddenly became a full-sized snake as dangerous as its original parent.

"By this time the elder Rockpile had so much money that, Midas-like, his riches became an embarrassment, and he turned his attention to divesting himself of the burden. From having

been the world's greatest acquisitor in the next twenty or thirty years he turned into the world's greatest private giver, creating colleges, medical schools, foundations for this and that. It would be curious to know just what motives animated the man in this second phase, whether he wished to make another kind of reputation as a public benefactor instead of being celebrated as the greatest public lawbreaker. Or was it that having succeeded beyond other men in acquiring wealth he became bored with the function and merely turned his ingenuity into another field, that of philanthropy? We shall never know.

“However, the more millions he gave away the more his fortune swelled, and meanwhile he was growing old and the care both of his fortune and of his benefactions must be entrusted to other men. The old, old man had become a myth, as well as an institution, while the younger Rockpile undertook the burden of distributing the Rockpile fortune. This younger Rockpile was a very earnest, conscientious person, doubtless a sturdy upholder of the régime of private wealth, of an individualism that had given him such enormous powers for good and ill over his fellowmen, but dedicated to the task of beneficence as sincerely as his father had been dedicated to the task of acquisition. That, by the way, was the ultimate thrill which the old social system provided for its most privileged,—the power of giving!

“Men like this younger Rockpile evidently considered themselves as wise stewards of riches with which they should irrigate the earth. The idea of making recompense for the crimes of acquisition faded more and more: the idea of fulfilling a special social function, that of preserving capital and redistributing it for the public good took its place. To us there is a forlorn conceit in any man's arrogating to himself the function of God in this manner, and we are fully conscious

of the irony of his mistakes. Why should he gather in such a huge harvest and why should he believe that he knows best how to distribute it so that it may fertilize the land? . . .

“Well, the list of the Rockpile benefactions is too long to remember, some of them wise, others foolish, and many futile. But the time came when the younger Rockpile too was growing old and the mountain of his father’s wealth although somewhat diminished bulked huge and insistently demanded—what will you do with me? The old man, the begetter of all this wealth, the robber and bandit of a half century past, the colossal giver of colleges and schools and foundations, was now nothing more than a feeble voice piping childishly his memories like Titurel. The world had entered upon a new phase, whose ways were still uncharted, after its great war. From profusion and waste society was plunged into poverty and fear. There was abundance of everything men desired, but the way to get it to them had been lost. There were many doctors prescribing remedies for this sick world, but none seemed to have a cure. With millions of human beings starving for food, homeless, without work, what was done with the remnants of the Rockpile fortune? New hospitals, new homes for the homeless, new enterprises to employ the jobless? None of these things, obvious as they might have seemed, was attempted by the custodians of the Rockpile millions! They may have seemed too commonplace. Something more grandiose than mere charity, something more unusual than mere philanthropy was needed to stir the jaded imagination of the younger Rockpile!”

The two companions by this time had left behind them the pleasant shade of the forest where the Central Park had once been and entered the line of regular tumuli that lined what had been a main artery of the ancient city. Pausing dramati-

cally the Chief of the Expedition exclaimed, waving his hand towards a huge bare mound at one side,—

“Behold what remains of the Great Amusement Center created by the last of the Rockpile millions! Under these acres of rubbish exist all that now remains of the final effort to make the vast Rockpile fortune useful for society. A cluster of enormous cliff buildings was erected here, some of which collapsed before they were finished, designed to house enormous entertainment facilities, which were to send amusement programs around the earth on air waves.

“It is not clear how the conception came to the younger Rockpile, who ‘sold him the idea’ as they used to say. Perhaps he was tired of trying to be wise and good and had concluded that the only gift one could safely make to another was that of amusement; that a sick world needed entertainment more than anything else. Perhaps by this time he had become so confused in his thinking that he had no definite purpose in mind! Some clever exploiters got hold of him, as pandering women often got hold of the very rich in their old age, and persuaded him that this was the easiest and most spectacular way in which to rid himself of the burden of his father’s fortune. Who can tell?

“At any rate there it is, all that is left of the tons of steel and cement which once towered hundreds of feet into the sky just here, making an already crowded section of a congested city more infernal than we can guess, emptying many cliff buildings already unable to pay their expenses, ruining many enterprises—for what? For charity? For art? Listen to these words from a shrewd contemporary journalist, one Flipman, written a few days after the colossal theater housed in one of these buildings had been opened to the public with a vulgar ‘show’ that lasted five hours!” . . .

He took from his pocket a bit of paper and read the following,—

. . . “It is a classic example of individualism run wild, all the more perfect as an example because the underlying intention was no doubt highminded and public spirited. I do not think for a moment that Mr. Rockpile took up this project to make money or to engage in ruinous competition with other enterprises. . . . He had meant to create a great center of popular entertainment. . . . But what he forgot was that in a closely integrated civilization like that on this island, the best intentions are not good enough. . . .

Radio City is a monument to a culture in which material power and technical skill have been divorced from human values and the control of reason. The great Rockpile fortune, the virtuosity of engineers and architects, have been expended on a project conceived in the notion that by increasing the quantity you increase the quality. On such reasoning two dinners are more nourishing than one dinner, and eighty ballet girls more charming than ten. This is the very essence of materialism, to make human values fit the equipment instead of adapting the equipment to human taste. In Radio City the first consideration was what the available money could buy and the available skill and labor could construct. What use could be made of it, what æsthetic, what human, what social purposes the contraption would serve are questions apparently reserved for the cold gray dawn of the morning after.”

“Just so.” The old man nodded in agreement. “And this is the morning after! . . . The Rockpiles built themselves a fitting monument of nullity, just as the Pharaohs built themselves colossal stone mausoleums,—but at least the Pyramids have stood the test of time and are still impressive, while this grandiose Amusement Center is an ugly heap of rubbish . . . a fit monument, too, for the civilization that lies disintegrated beneath the soil here, a civilization that believed that by in-

creasing the quantity of anything you increased the quality,—‘individualism run wild’ as your publicist well said. And there is nothing more to be said of Amusement Center, of the Rockpile fortune and the Rockpile philanthropy. . . . It was all one huge mistake, however noble and disinterested in intention. It was huge, ugly, futile, like the city in which it was born, and I have no doubt its reckless undertaking helped to accelerate the pace of disintegration of the civilization that gave it birth. . . . No man, no group of men can safely arrogate to themselves guardianship of the public wealth. The Rockpile fortune was built on a foundation of social injustice, and its fruits, so conscientiously poured out in ‘good works’ for nearly two generations, culminated at last in—this!”

With a final wave of disgust at the barren mound made by the débris of the huge Amusement Center the old man turned away. As they laboriously climbed over the uneven ground on their way to the nearest tunnel entrance to resume their investigations Felix remarked to his companion,—

“You did well to show me that desolate Amusement Center. It sums up in a manner more complete than anything else I am likely to find in this ancient city the cardinal error of the civilization that died here a thousand years ago. All its wrong thinking, all its stupidity and arrogance and brutality lie interred beneath those few acres of barren soil. . . . And what was the ‘amusement’ they designed to broadcast around the earth?”

“Oh, what they called vaudeville, popular songs and dazzling pictures, and dance music. . . . Theatrical amusement, as you know, had sunk to a low level in that day. . . . A great deal of technique, but no ideas and no real emotions and rather inferior music as we should think. . . . It was a sort of anodyne with which they drugged tired nerves, their form of amusement, and more deadly and universal after they

discovered how to transmit sound and color by air waves. What might have been a universal boon became a curse. It is said that as one passed through their streets or their great buildings one heard the raucous sounds of this 'entertainment' shot out from every door. Bedlam."

"And that was what this Rockpile fellow proposed to shoot around the earth into every hamlet? They ought to have conducted him to a Lethal Chamber."

"His big theater was the American national Lethal Chamber," the younger man jested, "more deadly than ours although not as swift in action!"

They rattled and bumped on under the dead city "downtown," stopping momentarily in the cellars of a great building that had once housed a mighty newspaper, and again in a dim railroad terminal, through which as the Chief of Operations remarked an incredible number of human beings had once scurried like mice night and morning on their way to and from their work. Felix, who sat with his eyes tightly closed in an attitude of mute endurance or profound meditation, evinced no desire to visit either of these ancient centers of population, not even the site of the Public Library, now an inconspicuous sandy mound. With a soul-racking scrunch of brakes and creaking of steel they finally drew up in an immense subterranean crossroads where several different underground routes met and crossed in a bewildering confusion of tunnels. Here they were forced to leave their ancient conveyance and proceed the remaining half mile on foot. A young workman holding a torch preceded them along the tortuous labyrinth, finding his way by some gnomelike instinct and warning them of sudden pitfalls where the foundations of mighty buildings had bulged into the path. The place stank

strongly of stale gases which made the old man cough violently.

"We have just begun on this part of the ruins," the Chief apologized. "It is such a confusion, a maze of burrowings crushed in by lofty buildings, that we have not yet determined how far it will be worth our while to go. I myself have been here only a few times, once when they pierced an entrance to the great vault of the largest bank in the world where I am now taking you. It was evidently an extraordinarily intricate bit of engineering work, and will give you a vivid impression of the importance these people attached to their system of property ownership,—they took so much pains to guard the paper symbols of their possessions!"

"Far more than they did property itself! If we may judge from their own accounts of financial crookedness, it was the symbol rather than the substance behind it that they valued. Again in that respect they resembled the Pharaohs, who built colossal pyramids in which to preserve the dead bodies of their rulers—and failed almost invariably in preserving them from robbers!"

"These fellows were clever enough to do that! The vaults at least, I judge, were rarely invaded while the régime lasted: but there were other easier ways of making away with the treasures stored in them!"

"I shall be interested to examine this storehouse of earthly treasure," the old man spluttered between coughs. "They were in truth the real temples of this people, where they worshiped, the most sincere form of worship that their society encouraged. As they said, 'where your treasure is, there is your heart also!'"

Just here the attendant stopped and threw the beams of the torch he carried into a dark pit at one side.

"What is that?" Felix asked, startled by the mysterious black

depth into which he peered, illumined for only a few feet by the feeble light of the torch.

"We haven't yet made that pit out," the Chief replied. "We think it may have been the end of some submarine tunnel—you know we are very near to what was once the harbor of the city. It was almost certainly not used for transportation purposes like other branch tunnels we have found. It may have been, as one of our engineers has suggested, a sluiceway for admitting the sea to these underground workings, which were sufficiently below tide level to be flooded."

"But why should they have wanted to let in the seawater?"

"Possibly for protection. They were latterly terribly in fear of popular riots, 'mob violence' as they called them, and they knew that their police were unreliable, often corrupt. They had soldiers, but widely scattered, and although they paid the ex-soldiers of the Great War (and a great many who had never been soldiers!) large sums from time to time as a sort of retaining fee to keep them loyal to the interests of property, they were never sure that at a pinch the 'vets' as they were called might not side with the 'mob'!"

"But what did they propose to do with the seawater?" the old man insisted impatiently.

"Flood this underground city with all its accesses to the vaults where their treasures were!"

"And drown out the people in them like so many rats in a hole!"

"Precisely. Nothing could be easier than to swing in the flood gates by touching an electric button. In a few minutes, an hour at the most, the whole end of the island with the subcellars of all its big buildings would have been submerged."

"What fiends they must have been even to imagine such a thing!"

"Yes, they grew cruel as well as desperate towards the end;

their leaders were touched to the quick at their most sensitive nerve, their property, by fear of losing it. Those who had been so long in power, thanks to their property, felt control slipping from their fingers, felt their grasp on what they were pleased to call their civilization growing feebler month by month. There had been for several generations an increase in ferocity, in impersonal forms of cruelty, since the introduction of the Machine Age. After the Great War they made a few half-hearted attempts for a more equable and sympathetic relationship between nations and among peoples as well as between those who controlled wealth and those who created it. But these altruistic efforts were never sincerely believed in by the so-called better elements, brought up on the creed of individualism, and after their League of Nations crumbled under the impact of the Japanese (who were secretly abetted by the great European powers) the Hard-Boiled Age, as they themselves called it, set in when it was no longer considered worth while to pay even lip service to ideals of 'peace and reconciliation,' 'social amelioration,' and all that nonsense, as they said. . . . I take it that it was during the Hard-Boiled Era these immense sluiceways for flooding the underground passages of this, the financial center of American civilization, were first installed, as an extra defense. We have discovered several similar vents in different places." . . .

The little party clambered on over twisted beams of steel, through narrow passageways lined with white tiles whose strange inscriptions had not wholly disappeared, ever descending on a gradual slope until they had reached almost the extreme tip of the old city. Here they turned aside into a dark hole cut from the native rock, as the Chief pointed out, for the formation was of solid ledge which offered a magnificent anchorage for the immense clifflike buildings whose

roots were inserted to a depth of several stories into the rock itself like teeth in the human jaw.

Slowly they wormed their way downwards to the lowest level of one of these lofty structures that had once towered above the earth for fifty or sixty stories, now merely an inextricably tangled mound of steel, stone, and rubbish. They stopped frequently to examine by torchlight the methods of construction, which seemed to interest the Chief greatly.

"All this," he said, "is much more instructive about their ways of thinking and feeling and living than their military forts or their factories. When we consider their limitations in material and technique this vault is an extraordinary accomplishment. . . . For instance, if it had not been for the discovery of our new zeta ray that melts any element, we should have been blocked by this layer of solid armor plate, more than ten feet thick—as they meant we should be, marauders as we are! Do you realize what this vaulted fosse in which we stand was made for? A sort of dry moat girdling the inner chambers of the bank vault, probably patrolled day and night by armed guards, and this inner wall was electrified with a deadly current, which was turned on after banking hours at the closing of the vaults. Extraordinary, isn't it?"

"As I have already observed, I know of nothing like it except the secret vaults beneath an Egyptian pyramid. They were made to guard the royal dead!"

"And both were looted by barbarians!"

"With this difference I take it, that in the secret chambers of the Egyptian pyramids were deposited many articles of great beauty and cultural significance. But here we have found so far nothing of any present importance. . . . Here is the entrance we have burned out with our zeta rays."

They stood before a massive round steel door several feet in thickness, in the center of which had been neatly bored

a small hole. Through this narrow aperture the two men crawled into the vault chamber and the workman who had accompanied them set up a portable light generator to illuminate the low steel-floored and steel-roofed chamber, the walls of which were completely lined by tiers of steel boxes and metal drawers of varying dimensions. One of the larger receptacles whose lock had been burned away was drawn out and presented to the old man by the workman. It was stuffed with a miscellaneous collection of thick parchments.

"This box," the Chief explained, stooping to pick up one of the stiff folds of parchment, "belonged to the bank itself, in which they stored the titles to property hypothecated by them. This now"—he let the folded parchment fall apart—"happens to be a ten thousand dollar obligation of the City of New York, due . . . let me see . . . in the year 'Two thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine A.D. payable in gold coin'—"

"What confidence those fellows had in the future, *their* future!" Felix commented, "to draw drafts against it due in a thousand years and more. Why, the City of New York was bankrupt when that was issued and ceased to pay interest on its bonds, for it could not collect its taxes because the property of its citizens was priced at absurd values!"

"See how fresh the bonds are, just off the engraver's bench! All the papers we have examined in this vault are remarkably well preserved, having been sealed up in this air-tight chamber. But unfortunately they are all like this bond of the City of New York, mere participation certificates in a wealth that no longer exists. This vault was said to have held securities of one sort or another of over a billion dollars gold in value at the time they were placed here. Not a sheet of the size of notepaper is of any real interest today, except as a record of monumental human folly."

"That bond you are holding isn't due until next year, if my arithmetic is correct. Do you suppose they thought their gold dollars would be worth the same amount when due as when borrowed?"

"I don't believe they cared," his companion laughed. "It was all a kind of metaphysics, their debts and their credits. . . . This won't be paid anyhow!"

"It wouldn't have been paid even if their civilization had not smashed up and gone under an Ice Cap," the old man retorted dryly. "For the most part they never paid their debts, just 'refunded' them as they called it and let them accumulate as an inheritance for future generations. They had issued so many of these 'obligations,' private and public, that the idea of paying them off had long since faded, in spite of their doctrine of the 'sacredness of contracts.'"

"Then what good were they?"

"Oh, as long as one did not question them, ask what they represented, as long as banks like this one would lend real money on them, they were good, like their gods as long as one believed in them. But when the squeeze came and their owners all at once ran in a panic to collect the money they had paid for these bits of paper, the so-called 'values' disappeared like smoke overnight. That was what went on towards the end of the Christian era, what they described as 'progressive bankruptcy,' national and individual. Their magazines and newspapers and books were filled with chatter about what was happening and what it all meant. A dull subject, for to any thoughtful person it was perfectly obvious what was happening. But you see these people, especially their bankers, who were as shortsighted as any of them, had lived for so long in a kind of cuckoocloudland of illusions that they were totally upset when they had to face realities. They invented all kinds of fairy stories to explain what was happening. (Some of them—

the more conscientious and clairvoyant ones—committed suicide, while others tried to escape by hiding in far-off places where they could not be reached by the savage mobs of persons they had defrauded.) . . .

“Their favorite myth about the collapse of their ‘credit’ system attributed it to the use of gold as a standard of values. The leading authorities were divided as to whether it was well to cling to this ancient superstition derived from primitive times of measuring all values material and human by means of this shiny metal or to abandon it and forget all about it. They never made up their minds on that point before the end overtook them. . . . Of course it would have made little difference what they did with their precious gold as a standard of values, their troubles lying far deeper than that.”

“The fellows who ran this bank evidently hadn’t given up their belief in gold. Look in here a moment.” The Chief led the way to the bullion chamber, a small inner vault, where great canvas sacks of minted gold coins were heaped in regular piles, and beside them lay a mass of gold ingots. Felix reaching into a bag extracted from it a small gold piece.

“The British Sovereign of the year 1913, just before the War broke out that toppled over their economy! . . . And here is an American Double Eagle of the year 1915 minted when these Americans had begun to acquire most of the world’s gold stock and the sobriquet of ‘Shylock.’ But I see no specimen of the German manufacture, which finally ruined the gold standard! . . . Our museums and toy shops might like some of these samples of old world coins, Chief?”

“There are enough of them to supply all such demands not merely here but in adjacent bank vaults—they seem to have made a specialty of collecting this rather inferior metal.”

“The other nations of the world, most of whom were in debt to this people, dumped their gold into the U.S.A.—let them

hold the bag as they used to say—foreseeing the day when gold would be quite worthless. . . . Of all foolish social superstitions the gold myth was one of the most ridiculous. Think of sane human beings, who had reached the level of civilization that these people had reached, shipping this yellow stuff back and forth across the ocean with all the risks of losing it, as many as three or four times a year, the same lot of gold! They couldn't trust each other enough in those suspicious days to establish a common deposit for their gold hoard and let it stay there, safe and useless, drawing paper vouchers against it if they wanted to. No! The stuff itself in coins and bars must travel back and forth."

The old man gave a disdainful push with his foot at the nearest sack out of which rolled a mixed lot of gold coins, Italian, French, Greek, and Spanish. Picking up a handful he examined the mintages critically.

"With all their skill in machinery they never learned to make as beautiful coins as some of the old Greek ones. Now if instead of this stuff they had left posterity some of the lovely coins of Syracuse or Cyrene or even the better Roman ones, we might consider ourselves lucky to have uncovered their hoard."

He let the coins fall on the steel floor of the cage. They rolled behind a pile of loose gold bars. One of these he kicked over.

"Such a useless treasure! Not even beautiful like our glass alloys. Yet they used to make ornaments out of it, believing that this yellow stuff had an intrinsic beauty because they knew it was costly in terms of human effort. A common trick of the human mind in those days and not yet entirely unknown! . . . Some of the cruder-minded of these rich people wishing to flaunt their wealth had their household ware made out of gold, even lined their toilet articles and bathtubs with

a thin coating of the precious metal. . . . Well, Chief, haven't you anything better to show me of your discoveries, something of real significance or beauty?"

The Chief shook his head.

"Not in these great vaults. In some of the smaller individual boxes where private persons stored their valuables we have uncovered a few nick-nacks, women's jewelry and the like, but nothing worth your while to bother with. We are having them catalogued and such as the fine arts department thinks worth preserving for any reason we shall send home for our ethnological museum. But so far the department reports finding only a few little terracotta statuettes of a late Greek workmanship, which were probably placed in a vault for safekeeping during the riots. Their connoisseurs knew how little intrinsic importance the works of their own artists had for we have found next to nothing of their own period treasured in these deposit vaults."

The old man with a weary and disappointed air turned towards the aperture through which they had entered the great vault, saying,—

"The ancient Greeks and Romans placed their treasures in their temples under the protection of their gods. Their temples were their banks. Not always secure, for occasionally under pressure some of their conquerors appropriated the temple hoards."

"Just as these fellows did,—I mean the bankers. The habit of misappropriation of funds entrusted to men was pretty common in the old world. Do you remember the story of Kreuger, a Swede, and of Insull, a Cockney? They were for ever talking about honesty, but with all the necessity for it if their system of society was to function successfully the standard of honesty which they achieved was decidedly low."

"That's where we have been cleverer than they were: by

taking away all value from money and privately acquired wealth we have finally eradicated the instinct to steal. Occasionally there is an instance of atavism,—some child who secretes toys as a dog buries his bone where he thinks nobody will find it. But on the whole we are honest for the best of reasons, because we lack the incentive to steal. . . . Well, Chief, it is a dreary place this inner shrine of the money-changer's temple, about as bad as that vast Amusement Center or the imitation Cathedral. It is stuffy too. Let us get back to the open and once more breathe that delicious perfumed sunlight, which is more precious than all the yellow metal heaped up here. . . . It is a ghastly commentary on this American civilization, this treasure house of theirs, with its thick steel walls and dry moat and electric wires. The Greeks and Romans at least put their valuables in the form of ivory and gold statues of their gods and other artistic objects. If this had only been the sacred treasury of Delphi and we the first invaders to discover its precious hoard! That might have been worth while, Chief."

The younger man smiled apologetically.

"I was afraid you would be disappointed. We have already turned up so much of their junk that we have gotten used to it and no longer expect to find anything lovely. Occasionally some of their mechanical devices are curious; our technicians are naturally the best rewarded. . . . I've done what I could for you on this site. Perhaps you might find Washington more to your taste?"

"Their capital city? Have you done much excavating there yet?"

"Not a great deal, but it is comparatively easy to lay bare Washington mounds. The glaciers stopped outside Philadelphia, which is a heap of junk, and there were not a great many cliff buildings in Washington, which from what I have

read of the ancient city must have been a pleasanter place than this for living."

"Perhaps another day I'll take a look at Washington. But I am tired and want to get back now to those lovely pine trees and listen to the afternoon concert. It must be nearly time for the music to begin. Do you know where it comes from today?"

"Southern China I think."

"I don't care so much for that Mongolian music, too modern for my taste."

"They say it is the oldest in the world, all based on ancient Chinese manuscripts."

"Perhaps that's why it is so modern. Everything comes back in time, don't you know. A fellow named Einstein discovered that unhappy truth before the Ice Age."

"Do you think that this New York will ever come again?" the other asked slyly.

"God forbid, as they used to say! At least in my time."

Emerging from the underground city through a long ramp that opened directly in the olden time upon the harbor side they entered their waiting airtaxi and soon were soaring high above the old city. The regular lines of mounds indicating buried cliff dwellings looked more than ever like those villages of prairie dogs to be found on the slopes of the western mountain ranges. The old man breathed in deeply the air which was coming in puffs across the tops of the pine forest from the open sea.

"To think that having once possessed all this loveliness they made such a mess of their big city. . . . They must have been a very grubby sort of people, don't you think?"

"Yet they were enormously proud of themselves and of their big cities, especially this one, the biggest of all, which lay at the edge of their continent, like a gate. They were forever boasting about it and showing it off to visitors from other

lands. I have read how they kept an official welcomer whose function it was to take distinguished strangers about the city and crack jokes with them and listen to their praises of New York and its marvelous skyline as they called the irregular edges of their cliffs."

The old man shook his head.

"A strange people," he murmured, "one of the strangest that ever lived on this earth!"

"They thought themselves very 'idealistic'—that was one of their favorite expressions I believe."

"I know they were forever pretending to some inner illumination, some peculiarly American spirit, which consisted in fact in the will to beat everybody at any game no matter what it might be. They were extremely competitive by instinct and very proud of it. . . . Just as well the Ice Age came and spared none of them. We should have found them difficult to deal with, conceited and incapable of coöperation. And the essence of our modern world is coöperation within anarchy, two things utterly abhorrent to the go-getter American typified in that wretched sheet you showed me last night. They had an invincible ignorance of world history and an innate want of taste."

"I can see that you won't care to emigrate to our New World!" the other laughed.

"I am much too old to emigrate anywhere except to my grave. Besides we have scotched that American illusion of bettering oneself by moving around the earth in a restless fashion. . . . Isn't everything worth while brought within reach of all the earth's inhabitants no matter where they happen to live?"

"You will find many of the younger members of the Expeditionary Force, however, eager to form a colonizing unit and

make their permanent residence in this North American continent."

"How do they know that there will be any colonizing units sent out here?"

"Such a vast virgin land of unknown riches can't be left empty indefinitely, they say."

"Now you are talking just like one of those old Americans!" the old man retorted with unexpected tartness, and added after a few moments of reflection, "besides it isn't wholly uninhabited. Aren't there some representatives of the old stocks, I mean of the aborigines in the mountains of the Southwest?"

"There are said to be a few descendants of the ancient Indians, living in small settlements on the mesas and in the valleys of the western mountains, much as their prehistoric ancestors lived in their mud villages. . . . But you don't seriously intend to leave this huge land with its vast potential wealth for the sole use of that simple people?"

"Chief, if you keep on talking like those damned Yankees I shall certainly contrive to have you recalled when I get back. That was just the crude way in which they talked about this 'land of opportunity' as they called it then. In terms of physical acquisition, of 'development' and personal greed. It was a fruit, this virgin continent, plucked and eaten before it was ripe. So their civilization was always green and raw. . . . This time let it lie fallow another thousand years under the kindly guardianship of those same simple Indians. I must see them before I return. Perhaps they and I can understand each other better than I could ever understand the people who built up this monstrous city we have just left. They may be of my own age and stratum of culture. . . . Ah, well, it will be good to listen even to Chinese music and forget all those horrors we have seen today."

Chapter Nine

MORE OF NEW YORK

THE next morning Felix did not appear for breakfast and the Chief went off without him to the headquarters of the Expedition, which had been established near the Transportation Center of the old city, thinking that the fatigue of the previous day's excursion into underground New York had been too much for his old friend, who had seemed depressed by what he had seen there.

As a matter of fact Felix had risen at his usual early hour and gone for a stroll in the dark forest surrounding the villa. He returned intentionally after the departure of the others, desiring to enjoy a few tranquil hours in the peaceful solitude of the old banker's home and to talk with Veronica in Khartoum, whom he urged to join him as soon as possible. . . . "For I shan't be staying on here long. There is less than even I expected to find to detain me! . . . Yes, bring your girls if you want to—they will be entertained. And we'll make a scurry over the continent as they used to do in the old days and see what is left of what they called 'the great open spaces.' We might come back through old Mexico where it is likely there has been less change in things than here. . . . Yes, the Ice Cap was as I suspected a merciful intervention! Our Expansionists should see what happens to mankind when it surrenders to 'natural evolution'—it will cure them of their longings for pure freedom!"

Veronica's laughter came from the air with lifelike vivid-

ness, slightly mocking and buoyant, as she promised to join him within the week. After finishing his talk and listening to the day's news summarized by his assistants in Khartoum, he strolled out once more to the greensward surrounding the villa and spent another hour in meditation, then had himself taxied to the ancient city where he was put down at what had once been the corner of Forty-second Street and Madison Avenue, which as the communicative young airscout informed him had once been the noisiest spot on the earth, if not the busiest. It was quiet enough this warm June morning! A light wind drew in from the southwest between the hillocks which were now all that was left of the mammoth towering buildings that once blocked in the narrow thoroughfare. A sky of soft blue, once miscalled "Italian," laced with fleecy clouds, unspotted by smoke or gases reached from horizon to horizon, cut occasionally by one of the small flying machines used by members of the Expedition for local transportation. A great silver airship came up out of the southern horizon moving swiftly towards the improvised airport where two days before Felix had landed.

The airscout pointed out the situation of the Administration Building, a short way down the cross street, but instead of proceeding thither the old man turned southwards along the narrow avenue, at a leisurely pace, glancing about him contemplatively as if he were trying to envisage with the aid of his imagination not so much the present scene as what had formerly existed here. On either side was a ridge of low hills of varying heights and bulk due to the amount of débris that through the centuries had slumped into a huddle, covered with a thin growth of bushes and scrub trees with an occasional hardier pine, betraying the poverty of a soil that consisted almost wholly of disintegrated cement and iron. Here and there groups of workers darted in and out of openings

made in the mounds, carrying with them flexible airhose and other apparatus. After a time the Chief himself appeared from one of the burrows, a sheaf of blueprints in one hand, and perceiving the old man called out,—

“Having a look around by yourself? When you have had enough of it you must come over to our headquarters and see how prettily we have dug ourselves in, as they used to say in the Great War.”

“Presently. But first I must get the feel of the old city as it was in full blast—if I can. These narrow lanes were then lined by perpendicular walls of giant buildings with glass and terracotta and brick sides, from which the street noises must have resounded with a deafening roar all day long and much of the night, for they had not discovered the means of straining discordant sounds out of the air as we do. Imagine this thin ribbon of roadway between two canyon walls packed closely with vehicles, each one emitting a gaseous cloud that stank so that the air, always stale, which one must breathe became impregnated with the fetid atmosphere of coal tar products. Along either side there was a narrow strip of pavement reserved for those unfortunates who had to brave the terrors of the street on foot. All this traffic, vehicular and pedestrian, was controlled by lights. When the lights in any direction were of one color one could proceed as far as the densely obstructed traffic permitted, until the lights turned to another color, when one was supposed to stop and mill around in the stalled mob.”

“Yes, I know they were proud of their devices for regulating traffic, but it must have been exasperatingly slow at the best. I have read that it took an hour or more to go a few blocks—and that for an American always in a hurry must have been nerve-racking!”

“The frequent delays would not have been bad for them, had it not been for the smells and the noises. It must have been

infernal to sit or stand in the midst of such a roar and stench, while the sun glared down between the canyon walls or the icy winter winds roared through the canyons. The pictures we have of street scenes of that period betray a curious deadness of face, with a harassed vision, a form of eyestrain towards something desired. Life on the street was a hideous delirium of futile motions—always a crowd, a jam, the proximity of other human bodies towards whom one felt instinctively more or less hostile. . . .

“Why, when one realizes what went on in this, the first city of America, how can one contemplate for one moment a rapid repopulation of this continent, even should we try with our wiser organization and fuller control over life to prevent the cruder mistakes that were once committed here! . . . We must cultivate our imaginations and the historical sense more broadly in order to understand what a disaster it would prove should we ever ‘go American’ as they used to say! . . . Instead of nosing about all day in the underground recesses of this great hive you should stroll through these grassy lanes and think upon the lives that once swarmed in them. Think of them intensively, not as so much dead fact, but as living human beings like ourselves,—what they fatuously called ‘souls.’ . . . What was the habitual expression of the crowd pouring out of that vast Vomitorium over yonder, or from the numberless smaller ones that served as exits from the underworld? It was a strange mingling of fear and anxiety and fatigue, a hunted animal look. Except for a negligible minority of the privileged, the vast mass of human beings were chained to the moving platform of effort, over whose exactions they had practically no control. Their very existence and that of those dependent upon them necessitated their clinging to the relentless moving platform of industry, and if agile and ruthless enough climbing up over the bodies of their fellows

to a more favorable position. . . . Nothing more profoundly shows the gulf between humanity of the so-called Xian era and our own than the habitual expression on human faces today contrasted with the furtive, fear-ridden visages that stare at us out of their old photographs.”

The old man had worked himself to an emphasis that brought their slow progress to a complete pause, while the Chief of the Expeditionary Force listened silently like a school-boy receiving a deserved admonition from a revered master.

As though to illustrate this master's thesis, the long grassy lane on which they stood, at the former corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street, began to fill with figures of boys and girls, young men and women, emerging from the numerous holes that penetrated the burrows on either side of the lane. It was the recreation period when for a couple of midday hours all labor stopped throughout the works and the different labor battalions assembled for food and recreation. From far below on the level avenue sprang up impromptu races; the sprinters came up the narrow lane in groups of ten and twenty at a time towards the two men who stood on the slight elevation watching the spectacle. The shorter course ended at the cross artery just beyond them, while the older and stronger runners continued on to the brow of the gentle acclivity, where a granite platform of some ancient American temple emerged from the rubble, and a few passed this to the forest of Central Park. . . . As the lines of runners swept past the old man like galloping horses intent on their goal, Felix whose mobile face had relaxed to a pleased and tender smile remarked to his companion,—

“Would you exchange *that* for all the so-called ‘civilization’ that once throbbed through this crowded thoroughfare! That spontaneous expression of an eager vitality, of joy in life, in those gay happy faces!”

They turned and sauntered back up the avenue, passing a group of young men who were pitching rocks on the terrace before the ruins of the old library. Warmed by their exercise in the glowing noonday sun they had stripped off their tunics and the bronze flesh of their bodies rippled as they moved. The old man crossed the grassy lane to watch the game more closely, absorbed in this picture of active youth. It was evident that he judged the condition of the society in which he held such a high position rather by the spiritual and physical expression of its members than from any statistical evidences of its activities and accomplishments or its increase of hoarded wealth. . . .

“They used to make much of athletic exercises in those old days, imitating as they so often did Greek ideas without really comprehending the Greek spirit underlying the ideas. Instead of holding games for honor and glory and love of sport these American games even among the youth in their colleges degenerated into a form of paid gladiatorial combat for which the public, too slothful or too weakened by their occupations to participate actively, got a vicarious excitement through watching others perform physical feats, such as fist fighting and ball playing. As they admitted themselves, they professionalized every game, made it a means of acquiring money that is, and thus from a happy expression of exuberant human beings such as our games their athletic contests became exhibitions of hired performers—or what was even worse, mimic battles cultivating rage, the ‘fighting spirit’ that they so much admired in those evil days. . . . Well, let us have a look at your quarters.”

Turning off the famous Fifth Avenue at Forty-second Street, the two went gently downwards past the excavated portals of the ancient Transportation Center (what Felix had called the

'Big Vomitorium'!) until they came to a tumulus rather loftier than its fellows, whose squat base had been cleaned of accumulated rubbish at what had probably been the fourth or fifth floor of an immense and towering building. On this terrace, which was recessed on all sides, had been erected a long low graceful building with transparent walls of a flexible vitreous material which could be either rolled up or looped back like heavy curtains in fair weather like today. Here was housed the entire headquarters of the large Expeditionary Force, within what was less than had formerly been one floor of the ancient Chrysler Building, with a sufficiently broad terrace on all sides to afford a garden.

"This spot is conveniently near the center of our activities in excavating and exploring the old city," the Chief explained. "We used as the foundation one of the first of the megalithic office buildings that we have excavated, one that was erected at vast expense at the period of decline in American civilization, with all the latest devices in construction and equipment. I am told that traces of buildings, even more 'futuristic,' may be still seen under the waters of the great inland lake beside which Chicago once was,—remains probably of the temporary structures erected to commemorate the hundredth year of the city's existence. . . . This Chrysler Building, which was erected by a successful gas-machine maker for his monument, appealed to the fancy of my young men as the site for our own activities. . . . It connects, several floors below, with the underground system of communications, which we find convenient."

Felix scrutinized the graceful structure of colored glass set in the midst of a blooming flower plot. It looked more like a park pavilion than a shelter for office workers.

"It seems to me," he mused, "that I recall a picture of the immense fortress-like building which once stood on this site,

with some gilded angels blowing trumpets at the corners of its highest tower. I suppose they were proclaiming the virtues of the gas-car its builder manufactured! The Americans were fond of that kind of publicity, which they called advertising, such as writing in smoke upon the clear heavens the cacophonous names of favorite brands of cigarettes or face powders and the like. Strange fancy that of their successful men to build such monuments to themselves, although hardly stranger than the desire of the old Egyptians to bury their remains in massive pyramids. In their case, however, they fondly expected their tombs to serve them for eternity for homes, while this Chryscross—”

“Chrysler,” the Chief corrected with a smile.

“—this Chrystus must have realized that his monument would be pulled down within a few years, maybe in his own lifetime, to make way for something bigger and better.”

“Without doubt, if his world had not already begun to crumble even before this huge cliff had been finished! Many of the stories were never occupied in this as in other of the newest buildings we have entered, the city being vastly overbuilt and the exodus from the crowded hive having already begun. . . . Another extraordinary fact is,” the Chief continued, as they mounted the steps to the terrace surrounding the headquarters building, “that this Chrysler’s motor-car business, which was by no means the largest concern of that kind in this country, occupied for its management several floors of this mammoth structure, literally many acres of floor space, while we carry on the entire business of the Expedition within this small one-story structure, which we find amply sufficient for all our present needs. A striking illustration of the contrast between the two civilizations.”

With this the two entered the large airy common room where ten or fifteen men and women were seated at long

tables, examining plans, looking at photostatic copies of ancient maps or glancing at a series of small, sharply etched, colored pictures projected on a white wall at one end, which represented actual scenes of work in operation telephoted from outlying stations. There was no noise in this large room, either of clicking machines or of hurrying messengers or of sharp voices. Everything seemed to progress steadily, quietly, at a predetermined pace, with the atmosphere of a library reading room rather than of a busy office. Instead of the banging of doors, the rasping voices of tired clerks, the scurrying of innumerable feet along concrete passages, and masses of typed papers in duplicate and triplicate, and metal filing cases, and all the other mechanical paraphernalia without which "big business" of the olden days would not have considered itself alive, making clutter and clatter, all here was orderly and leisurely and subdued like the studio of a master craftsman.

"Much of the detail is done elsewhere, naturally, some of it in each one of the outlying stations. We decentralize all activities that we can. But the main threads of everything must necessarily pass through this office, to be coördinated and interpreted."

"How many persons have you in the Expedition at present?"

"Around ten thousand at the last count, yesterday. That includes all the exploratory field expeditions of which there are at present fifteen, engaged on different sections from the Arctic zone southwards, also the subdivisions which we have settled on different sites chosen for exploration, as at old Washington. There are only two or three thousand in New York. We keep the new recruits here for a little while until they become acclimated and accustomed to the work, then send them off into the country. They are all eager to get away. We have to rotate the field units and have long waiting lists of applicants for country service. . . . You can see some of the workers

outside there looking for their names in the lists we post daily.”

Through the rolled-up glass side of the room could be seen a dozen faces around a billboard erected on the long terrace.

“They don’t have to come over here to find out, for the list is read out in the sleeping quarters every evening, but they are so keen that they sneak over here when they can in the recreation period. We should have to double our force to take on all those who have applied for service at home and have passed the qualifications or limit the term of service in the Expeditionary Force to a few weeks for all but the most necessary specialists.”

“Good!” the old man nodded. “I believe in giving everybody who is fitted for the work in any capacity a chance to see what it is like in the old New World—they’ll be more contented with what they have at home, ever afterwards. . . . Our idea was not to start until everything was ready, until we knew just what we wanted to look for. We were going out to uncover the most planless and haphazard civilization that ever existed on this earth; to get the maximum results we had to think out everything in advance and arrange how to handle it. It’s taken nearly half a century to get ready,” the old man concluded, a vision of those busy preparatory years in which he had been concerned for most of his life flashing into his mind.

“So the day after our advance unit disembarked down there among the hillocks we were digging into the Central Vomitorium over yonder, and had started the transverse trench through which we entered the bowels of the city on our excursion yesterday.”

The Chief under whose eye this advance unit had made its first attack upon the ancient city dilated with pardonable

pride on the exact efficiency of his plans. The old man laughed dryly.

"How you would have pleased old Chrystus, the gas-car magnate, if he could hear you! That was just the sort of thing Americans admired most, technical efficiency and complex organization. And strangely enough the sort of thing that they failed so tragically in accomplishing on a large scale at the end."

"They never would have had the patience to prepare for forty years," the Chief observed.

"Bless you, not for five! They would have changed their plans a dozen times and forgotten the whole matter at the end of the first decade. Some other political clique would have gotten into office in Washington, who would have accused their predecessors of fraud and malevolence and spent their time in undoing whatever had been accomplished. That is why with all their amazing material development they made so little progress in the art of self-government during the century and a half of their existence as a nation. As a human society they were worse off at the end with their one hundred and fifty millions than at the start, with thirteen small scattered settlements!"

"Still, they were remarkable engineers and energetic and bold in their undertakings. The erection of such an immense building as this one was and the contrivances of the bank vault we explored yesterday prove that. . . . It seems they lacked only a little—a very little—which would have enabled them to advance to the higher plane of our civilization. I often wonder why they never took the step! As mere evolution it was far less difficult than many of the strides humanity has taken in the long journey upwards from the amœba to ape and from ape to *homo sapiens*. They were so near us that I

fancy they must be watching what we do in uncovering their dead bones."

"And yet so far from us! Not in mental capacity nor in functional adaptation. I grant you that the human race has advanced very little in these respects. Although we have stretched out the average term of life by quite twenty years and enormously increased its capacity for normal activity by removing disease and fear and physical distress, we have not added a cubit to man's stature nor given him any novel instruments for controlling his environment. . . . But we have changed his spirit, fundamentally, so that his old equipment, biologically and physiologically, works in totally different ways, with a wholly different orientation and destiny. It is the same engine, but with a new motive power, to use a figure that your old Chrystus—"

"Hem, Chrysler was the name of our patron saint."

"A ridiculous name, too. . . . Your old Chrysostom in the prime of his activity would not have looked very different from you, Chief, and no doubt he would greatly admire the efficient way in which you are cleaning out his old hive. He might have offered you the job of chief construction engineer in his gas-car factory at a huge salary in gold ingots or paper participation shares in his company. But he could not possibly divine why you and I are here, nor what we intend to do with our discoveries."

"No more than I do!" the Chief interjected.

"You will in time, my dear fellow. You really know now what we ought to do with this place, only you are temporarily intoxicated by the mess you are working in and can't recognize the truth within your heart! . . . But as I was saying, this old automobile manufacturer, who was I have no doubt a respectable and admirable man from the standpoint of the Christian era, benevolent, generous, public-spirited and all that

like the Rockpiles father and son, could no more live today than the mastodon could be taught to suck milk from a bottle. He would be in such a general state of bewilderment and revolt that he would explode from sheer disharmony with his surroundings."

"Don't you think that some of the ancients, the best of them, might have been reëducated to an understanding of our new world?"

"The best of them, yes. Perhaps more of even these Americans than we now imagine longed for a better world and dreamed of something not unlike what we have achieved, although they hardly dared to admit it to their intimates. They were for the most part unknown and despised individuals in an era of push and bustle and fierce rivalries, of go-getters and hard-boiled realists as they loved to call themselves. Almost no well-known person like this motor-maker would have had the least comprehension of what our modern world is about. So the gulf between us, however slight it may appear at certain angles, was immense in fact: it was like the difference between day and night, every feature of the psychological landscape changed. . . . Well, let us thank the gods of all the ages that we haven't *that* job on our hands, of adapting our ancestors to live in a civilized world. Even I with my immense store of natural optimism would quail at such a prospect! I should gently urge them to walk into the nearest Lethal Temple and there finish the lesson of how to live sanely, which was altogether too hard for them to master by themselves."

The old man having apparently reached a period his companion suggested,—

"You must have a look at our flower gardens along the terrace. We discovered in a private vault in this same building

a few small packets of flower seeds. How they ever got there, why anyone in those days should have cared to preserve thus carefully these particular seeds, one can only guess. Perhaps the owner of this private receptacle for valuables was a lover of flowers and considered these seeds as something specially rare. Anyhow the boys wanted to try them out and so we planted them in beds along the sides of the southerly terrace. That was when we first arrived, and now many of them are in bloom,—odd little things, not much to be so careful about after all! We raise much more magnificent flowers in scent, color, size, and abundance, and many more varieties. But they have a quaint sentimental appeal, if for nothing else because they waited so long for their blooming!”

“That was one of the more lovable traits of otherwise often barbarous ancient peoples, their love of the earth and the plants it bore. From the colored pictures in an old seed catalogue I have seen, I gather the Americans had made some progress in creating new and pleasing varieties of the commoner weeds and flowers.”

A few rows of pansies, petunias, poppies, daffodils, tulips, and alyssum were lifting their blossoms along the terrace to the June sun.

“Wild flowers these,” Felix observed indifferently. “They look brave here on this old rubbish heap, and it is interesting to think that their seeds lay dormant in a metal box during all those centuries. It was the even temperature of the vault as well as the dark that preserved their potency, as happened with the wheat and millet discovered in Egyptian tombs. . . . You might preserve some of these seeds, Chief, for our horticultural stations—they will interest the children.”

A young man with a dark skin but of delicate Aryan features was engaged in watering the flower beds and a blond young woman was weeding nearby. She was vigorous and

comely with the abundant yellow hair, the blue eyes, and the fresh complexion of old northern peoples. Her dominant ancestor may have come from Sweden or Finland. The two were well contrasted and something in their companionable proximity suggested that they were intimates, paired. Neither the old Greek nor his younger companion remarked upon this relationship nor seemed aware of it. One of the great benefits human society enjoyed from its sex arrangements, whereby all who were not allowed to become parents were sterilized and then given complete freedom of union with any—sterilized—mate, was the absence of all comment on sexual arrangements, on individual sex life. What had formerly been the most general—and the most vulgarized—topic of conversation had at last been relegated to a decent privacy, to the consciousness of those concerned. . . . The young woman looked up from the flower bed into which her plump arms were thrust when the Chief addressed her.

“Your garden is doing nicely in this fine June weather, Edith. You couldn’t have a flower bed in the Labrador station where I am told you and this young man want to go.”

“I know that, and I had rather go out to a California station, but Rab says there will be no chance of that—the waiting list is a yard long already.”

“Why do you want to leave your pretty garden here?” Felix inquired.

The young woman stood up, a handful of blossoms in her arms, and reddened slowly before replying.

“Oh, it would be fun living up there so far from everybody. There are big white bears and deer with enormous horns and wonderful glass lakes and—”

“Nights twenty-four hours long in winter,” Felix interpolated.

The young man said quickly,—

"All right—we'll build us an ice cabin and make skin clothes and live cozily enough."

"You would have to agree to stay there some time if you went," the Chief replied as the two men moved away, and added to his companion,—

"That is a case where mutual attachment interferes with individual adaptation. The young man is one of our best specialists in ceramics. He should go to one of the new southwestern stations. But the girl is merely a good housekeeper,—first class domestically,—and there is nothing for her in such a station. Yet they don't want to be separated even for a short time. Did you notice how promptly the young man championed her suggestion of an Arctic residence? There would be nothing for him to do there all through that long night!"

"I like their looks," the old man remarked, "and the capacity for exclusive attachment is always worth encouraging. . . . Perhaps I could find something for them both when I leave here."

"When will that be?" the Chief asked, a note of disappointment in his voice.

"Soon. It was characteristic of old New York that it tired out the stranger within its gates very quickly."

"They usually made a longer stay here than a couple of days."

"We move more quickly today: one of our hours is worth at least a full American day," the old man retorted. "According to that reckoning I have already been here rather more than forty days, which seem to me more like years, so stuffed have they been with sensations and impressions. . . . But before I leave this part of the world I must look at Washington. You said an afternoon would do for that?"

"The trip takes only thirty-five minutes in the egg rocket we have installed. We can easily give you an idea of the place

this afternoon and be back for a late dinner at the villa. The rocket is shot hourly from the rear of the Vomitorium. We might have luncheon and take the one o'clock egg?"

"Dear man, I haven't lunched in forty years. You go to it and join me here when you have finished your meal. Meanwhile I'll have a chat with those two nice young people out there."

Nodding to the Chief, Felix drew near the couple, who were still bending over the flower beds, and talked with them for some time. What he had to say interested them greatly as could be gathered from the expression on their faces of amazement and delight.

"So be on hand when I send you word that I am leaving!" he concluded.

"We'll be there," the two chorused and set off, as if to make immediate preparations. . . .

"One of the pleasures of old age is to play Providence, to make things happen right for others, especially for young folk like those," the old man observed to the Chief when he reappeared. "You think the young woman is the domestic kind?"

"One of the best, invaluable for looking after things and keeping them tidy, a breed rather rare these days when every girl wants to beat her boy friends to adventures. But this Edith comes of an old reliable North European stock, whose people because of inclement weather conditions had to make much of their homes. She just missed getting her motherhood Permit by being a little too stupid, slow mentally perhaps I should say."

"If I had been the judge I should have winked at that defect. We run to cleverness overmuch, perhaps. A little slower mental movement might steady us, nothing positively dull, but something less exuberant and explosive," the old man grumbled as

they sauntered out of the administration building in the direction of the Vomitorium.

The rocket plane was, as everybody knows, not a new idea by any means. Ever since the Great War at the end of the Christian era had demonstrated the efficiency of high explosives, human ingenuity had sought to set this principle of explosive gases to useful purposes. The extravagant expectation had even been that by this means distant planets, at least the moon, might be reached by mankind. But the more reasonable efforts of modern men had adapted the rocket to terrestrial flights of short duration.

"Why go to the moon?" as the Chief jestingly remarked when he and Felix entered the egg-shaped vehicle in which they were to be shot to the site of the ancient capital of the United States of America. "There are so many more interesting spots for man to explore on his own globe. It is much more to the point to discover a method of accurate control, to know how you will finish your journey once you have been launched . . . and thanks to our latest developments we have established a quite reliable control of the missile even from within it and can land it just where we intend to, that is if we don't try to go too far. Up to a thousand miles the rocket is reasonably safe and sure as a means of transportation and swift; beyond that limit the curvature of the earth makes it risky."

"If you can trust yourself to it," Felix replied with a yawn, for he disliked talk about the mechanics of living, which fortunately for him because of superior technical accomplishment and a lively interest in other matters the modern world did not much indulge in, in contrast to the age when comfort gadgets and sex were the two staples of popular conversation. "I can well afford to risk the little that is left of my life."

His companion knowing the old man's indifference to mechanical contrivances forbore to expatiate on the ingenuity of the little car, which would carry them nearly three hundred miles in a little over half an hour. By the time they had risen in a long parabola over the Jersey coast and were shooting across the undulating fields that had once been Philadelphia a misty drizzle had set in, obscuring the foreground. The old man casting one glance through the transparent side of the car at the ruffled surface of the earth where formerly a populous American city had existed closed his eyes and murmured,—

"The City of Brotherly Love . . . rather a misnomer as it turned out! Better known as the home of the canny Benjamin, and later of that periodical you found in the servant's bedroom at the villa. . . . Thank all the gods that ever were we aren't obliged to uncover all the dull and ugly cities of the ancients!" . . .

Within another ten minutes the shooting rocket, as if consciously animated, slackened speed with a decrease in the intensity of the magnetic attraction that governed its motions, and began to descend in an ever sharper arc towards the earth.

"We must have passed over Baltimore," the Chief remarked glancing at the dial, but the old man did not open an eye until with a final sinking swoop the rocket shot into a dark tunnel and came gently to a stop.

"What's this?" Felix asked opening both eyes.

"The old railroad terminal of Washington. We found it convenient for the reception of our rockets,—where they once housed their transportation boxes in long sheds."

Stepping from the car upon a gentle ramp they mounted to the excavated hall above.

"Very neat trip," Felix murmured, "not unlike that silly game with a small ball they were all mad about in those days.

You know what I mean, golf—it must have developed from the small boy's instinct to kick a stone or stick or any bit of rubbish ahead of him. We have been neatly 'lobbed,' as they would have said, over several bunkers straight into the eighteenth hole. Well, as they were also fond of saying, 'where do we go from here?'"

The Chief chuckled at the old man's bored attitude towards the home of American statecraft.

"It's only a step from the terminal to the small hill on which once stood the American Capitol surmounted with the big dome you must be familiar with . . . their Pnyx, you know."

The old man nodded and yawned.

"Did you ever look into the record of the debates that went on under that dome, preserved in an immense tome called *The Congressional Record*? Possibly the dullest and most futile volume ever printed in the history of the world. I suppose more foolish and utterly unreal words have been uttered on the top of this hill than in any place now known to humanity—and that is saying much!"

Under a leaden sky they slowly climbed the slight acclivity of a reddish clayey soil which supported a scrubby growth of trees and bushes, through which a rough path had been cut. At the summit the old man seated himself wearily on an uptilted block of granite that carried on one side an almost obliterated inscription. After cleaning the stone and studying its faint lettering a smile of recognition broke over the old Greek's face. "This must have been taken from a memorial erected during the presidency of one Warren Harding to the Unknown Soldier. You know that it became the custom after their Great War to erect these monuments to Unknown Soldiers in every land. As the peoples engaged in the bloody fracas had been taught by their governments that they were

fighting for freedom, in the cause of humanity, in order to end war—and a lot more silly lies like that—for they were really fighting about rubber and oil and the right to enslave backward races,—the least they could do was to honor the millions of common soldiers who had given their lives for they knew not what and left their bodies mingled in the dust of so many fetid corners of the world.”

While the lilac shadows of the June twilight gathered over the gentle Virginian hills the old man mused further,—

“They gave themselves, at least they were told so, to save ‘democracy.’ Poor boys, they did not even know what democracy was—there was no such thing in their world and least of all here in the United States, and could not have been under the sway of ‘robust individualism.’ . . . Democracy, as every child now realizes, depends upon a state of mind, not a written constitution. The corrupt and ignorant mob that gathered in this great building periodically, so-called representatives of the people, were merely the agents of the powerful owners of property, a special class of imbeciles that the ruling class maintained to perform the trivial tasks of government for them. They were traders in privileges, bartering laws for money or political prestige or saving face, and had less conception of what democracy meant than so many convicts in a prison.

“You should read an account of one of their great party conventions, held every few years to nominate a candidate for the highest office in the nation. These were fantastic mass meetings, with huge mobs of delegates and spectators, howling, shouting, marching, singing, fighting, drunk and disorderly, thousands of them, deliberating thus on the grave business of selecting a leader for the nation (who had already been previously chosen by the few who held real power). There in the fierce heat of an American city in midsummer—something worse than anything we experience today in Khartoum—with

every sort of noise, bedlam, sweating like animals, was this mob supposed to determine the policies and the candidates, who should 'represent' one hundred and fifty millions of civilized human beings. There, overcome by fatigue, stimulated by alcohol and coffee, bewildered by hullabaloo, these thousands of sodden delegates voted ballot after ballot, traded and stole delegates, until at the end of some days in sheer exhaustion a list of candidates and a verbose and intentionally meaningless program was somehow promulgated. And somewhat later the Americans of voting age, women as well as men, tried to choose between two sets of equally meaningless proposals and two lists of equally insignificant candidates, who represented nothing but the ambition to become rulers of this government machine here in Washington."

"Yet this nation survived for nearly two hundred years, and grew greatly in numbers and wealth, in spite of makeshift government!"

"A miracle, which merely proves the innate endurance of the human being and his power to survive the most unfavorable conditions and to achieve some kind of order and freedom locally, at home, of themselves. It is true these United States of America (which should have read 'North America') survived and grew more powerful and wealthy for nearly two centuries in spite of an increasingly corrupt and inefficient government and of the indifference of the majority of the people to the sort of government they lived under. They accomplished what they did accomplish in spite of, rather than because of, their so-called democratic institutions, just as they grew somewhat in general intelligence and in the command of nature in spite of their religious and social superstitions.

"But in the end, the waste, the corruption, the incompetency of their political system rotted the fiber of the people, and the state collapsed into the utter confusion of its last years,

nothing whatever being done here in Washington to prevent the disasters that threatened. All they did here was to vote huge loans to be given for the most part to those who needed them least. Towards the close of the American régime every tenth person of mature years was somehow employed in government, and each mature citizen must pay one day's wages out of six towards the upkeep of this cumbersome and inefficient machine whose verbose mouthpiece was right here beneath our feet. Such was 'democracy,' as the Americans understood it!"

"It would appear that ancient peoples for all their experimentation were never able to devise a stable system of governing themselves. The old Athenians, also, had a kind of democracy and failed. They then tried an oligarchy of powerful citizens and failed, and at another time aristocracy and failed, finally reverting to despotism—and went under to oblivion. Just as much later in the world's history that lively and lovable people, the Italians, did! . . . Somewhere on the globe at different times kings and emperors and popes, tyrants and mobs, have all held power over their fellows, and all have failed to rule with enough decency to endure for long.

"So in desperation mankind has always reverted to some form of despotism, completing the vicious circle from anarchy to tyranny! Until wise men have held despairingly that human beings are incapable of self-government, must inevitably revert to bondage in one or another form. The new despotisms, fascist and communist, which arose after the Great War, were already crumbling when the earth, as if weary of its incompetent children, turned cold and wiped their miserable makeshifts of civilization off the map!"

"Possibly mankind cannot govern itself—even our own flexible anarchism may in the end fail to satisfy! Though it has

lasted for the better part of a thousand years, it too may have within it the seeds of ultimate decay."

The gathering gloom of the rainy twilight seemed to have penetrated the souls of the two men who wandered over the desolate remains of what had once been the seat of the greatest power the ancient world had ever known, meditating upon the fate of that mighty effort in human government, which had so abjectly failed and gone down to ruin in catastrophic misery. Here where the noblest aspirations for "freedom" and "equality of opportunity," for human justice and human happiness, had ended in the dribbling futilities of weak and selfish and mean-spirited representatives of the people, in impotence and senility, a bitter ironic spirit seemed to rise from the mounds of dust to mock the citizens of a new world, sighing,—
"We too had our splendid dream and see how we have ended! A heap of stones and dried mud, barely covered with weeds!"

As if in reaction to this whispered sneer, the old man rose vigorously, and turning his back on the rough stony mound where once the proud Capitol had stood, gazed steadfastly into the misty distance of the wooded hills beyond the river, murmuring to himself the words,—
"That these dead shall not have died in vain . . . that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from this earth"! . . .

"No, Chief, we shall not fail where this people failed! They failed because they started at the wrong end of the human problem, with the *rights* of individuals and their property interests, not with the *minds* of these individuals and their obligations to each other. Consequently, their government inevitably degenerated into an arrangement by means of which a privileged minority got what it wanted at the expense of its fellowmen, here in this nation so nobly conceived as well as in more ancient societies. Ultimately it made no difference whether the privileged minority were a king and his favorites

or an aristocracy and their dependents or a powerful bureaucracy or a corrupt plutocracy as here in these United States. One class in the community always profited at the expense of the whole, and all their efforts to stabilize their greeds and their interests and prerogatives were futile. All human history before the Ice Age was a record of efforts by single groups to gain possession of supreme power for their own selfish purposes. Under such conditions government was an unsolvable riddle, the stabilization of human societies impossible for any length of time. . . .

“If they had begun at the other end of the problem, at the creation of governable citizens, of individuals animated by healthier motives than personal ambition and personal greed—‘self-realization’ as they called it!—they might have succeeded in creating a stable society as well as we have. But with such a mass of noisy squirming ‘individualists,’ solely inspired by self-interest, inculcated every hour of their conscious lives until it had the mystic force of a religion with the creed of personal success, any coherent control would be as impossible as with a society of madmen. And in the end they were in large part mad, or degenerate and criminal in instinct, as they have revealed themselves to us in their whirling words as well as by their strangely stupid actions in the face of universal calamity.” . . .

The two descended through an open glade that the Chief identified as formerly the “Avenue of the Presidents” leading directly from Capitol Hill to the modest residence of the chief executive of the nation (now a thicket of green alders) and on towards the muddy stream below. On their way they passed a heap of granite blocks lying in broken fragments over a considerable surface of the ground.

“We have identified these scattered blocks of stone as having once formed the lofty Washington Monument, a celebrated

memorial of the Republic much frequented by sightseers," the Chief explained. "And over yonder in the distance is the site of another memorial that I have marked for excavation, erected to the greatest of all their Presidents, who held office while the nation was torn by a bloody feud, I can't remember just what about."

"Oh, a sectional strife, as usual in civil wars, each side passionately believing it was solely right, fighting for its honor and sacred rights, homes and all the usual stuff, although they were both fighting for their property. They killed nearly a million of their best men in this row, spent much treasure that wisely used might have solved the dispute, and incidentally ruined the lives of numberless women and children for two generations."

"I remember it now, the war to free the black slaves, wasn't it?"

"Not exactly—the slaves were never freed! They fought as men always fight because the blood lust seized them, and at the end both sides were the poorer."

"We might sit here by the fragments of this mighty monument and recite their Declaration of Independence," the Chief suggested ironically.

"And their famous Constitution, more honored in the breach than in the observance thanks to their Supreme Court, which interpreted it beyond recognition."

"We might include the Amendments, especially the notorious one about strong drink. The one privilege that most of the citizens seemed to crave at the end was the right to drink alcoholic beverages. While their world was crumbling under their feet they found nothing better to do than to squabble over the drink question."

The gray twilight lay thick over the silent river and the wooded hills that stood like silent sentinels around the rum-

pled plain where formerly had been the capital of the American republic. This seemed less humped and distorted in contour than the site of ancient New York because of the absence of high buildings in the old city and the large spaces given to parks and to broad avenues.

“This Washington must have been a pleasant place to live in at its best, that is, before the Great War which doubled or trebled its population. It became then an enormous bureaucratic hive, where probably more talk and less work went on than in any center of the ancient world. . . . Odd that with such a brave cry as that Declaration of Independence, with the fervent desire to create on new soil the freest of all human societies, within a brief century and a half—a mere nothing as time should be reckoned—there should have evolved only a huge bureaucracy. Freedom broke down beneath the crushing burden of taxation, and at the long last there was no freedom, only license and intrigue! The good founding fathers little knew what an evil force they were fostering by their preoccupation with property rights; how the violence of an unbridled individualism would wreck all their noble aspirations. . . . Well, peace to its ashes! It is calm and tranquil here at last. There would be little to gain from disturbing its remains?”

“So far we have merely mapped and surveyed the city, identifying the chief sites, not trying to excavate. There may be something in the great library worth hunting for . . . not much else.”

They turned back towards the terminal where the rocket car awaited them.

“This north and west part of the old city was given over to housing. Nothing here but rubble and sand, miles of it. From all accounts it must have been an uncomfortably warm and humid place much of the year. They say one can still

find traces of human footprints in the black surfaces of their roadways!"

The old man sank into the cushioned car and closed his eyes while he was being softly shot through the air to the New York terminal. As he emerged from the rocket he remarked,—

“Even the hustling Americans would have admired the despatch with which we ‘did’ their national capital this afternoon.”

“Just four hours.”

“Quite all it was worth.”

Chapter Ten

THE REAL AMERICA

THE Long Island villa of the old American banker was ablaze with lights from end to end when the two travelers approached it in the airtaxi they had taken from the Vomitorium. Within the forest glade that surrounded the villa a group of women and young men awaited the arrival of the airtaxi and Felix was greeted as he stepped to earth by Veronica's laughter and ringing voice,—

"You hardly expected us so soon?"

"Hardly!"

"Well, we are here and hungry for our supper. . . . I was afraid if I delayed you might have slipped away somewhere, your voice sounded so bored with old New York."

(In truth a note of weariness and disillusion in her old friend's voice when he spoke with her the day before had spurred her to prompt action. Asking a few of her girls to accompany her she had sped to Khartoum late in the evening and there taken the morning airliner for the West) . . .

"We poked around in the old city a bit, walked up their famous shopping street and were shown about a cave store in the underground basement of a mammoth building—must have been a horrid place to live in!—visited an enormous hotel where thousands of poor creatures used to sleep in tiers of cubbyholes, then came on out here to rest and enjoy the delicious perfume of this great forest."

"As usual, Veronica," Felix laughed, all sense of fatigue

gone from his face, "you have skimmed the cream off the dish in one draught. Tomorrow the Chief will show you a bank or two, the Big Vomitorium from which he shoots his rocket cars, and a few miles of the tunnels under the city and you will have 'done' New York as they used to say and be ready to accompany me on my journey around the continent. . . . I am so glad you are here. . . . Is that Alisa?"

"Yes—and her young man. I brought them along as a reward for good behavior. They are keen for adventure; we might drop them off somewhere and let them have a few excitements."

The young people, their distressing perplexity finally solved, were evidently enjoying the new life of complete freedom opening before them in this strange land. Alisa, her eyes gleaming duskiy with budding passion, exclaimed,—

"I'm for staying here always, somewhere in a great forest, if Paul wants to!"

"Another 'Paul and Virginia'?" the old man joked. "We already have an Edith and her young Rab—perhaps we'll start a settlement for restless youth somewhere." . . .

"And this is Iris," Veronica interrupted, bringing forward a lovely little woman with an ivory tint and the somewhat flattened features of a Mongolian type. "She is another one who is seeking adventure!"

In the group brought by Veronica from her Mountain College were also a delicate Javanese and a Hindu girl from a remote province of ancient India, as well as several young African women. As all of them with the exception of Alisa had received the birth Permit, it was evident to Felix that Veronica designed their mating with suitable young men of the Expeditionary Force and possibly spending the rest of their lives in the New World. He smiled at the persistent pur-

poses hidden beneath seemingly trivial acts that his comrade invariably exhibited. . . .

The new visitors animated the evening meal. There was much gayety, laughter, and youthful bantering in the party gathered in the somber library of the old American banker. At the conclusion of the meal there came up the question of future plans. Felix and Veronica stood beside the Chief before a large relief map of the North American continent while the latter traced a tentative itinerary here and there.

"We thought of sending you first to Detroit," he began.

"The gas-car place? What's to be seen there, more than the buried fragments of immense sheds?"

"It was known in the ancient world for its development of the moving platform, which did so much to revolutionize industry at the end of the Christian era."

"And to wreck it! It was the American bed of Procrustes on which the workman was crucified. . . . Pass Detroit, Chief! I know all I care to about it—and more!"

"We shall have to pass a good many other places, if you don't care for the Detroit exhibit. . . . All this part of the continent"—the Chief drew his hand across the center of the map—"was largely given over to huge factories, which the Americans were constantly enlarging and rebuilding and equipping with new and improved machines."

"I know," Felix exclaimed impatiently. "They did their best to make the country one immense and infernal boiler works, and before they finished they were equipped to deluge the entire world with goods, which they could not distribute in sufficient quantity to keep their huge factories going. . . . But what was there to *see* in those places even when they were going full blast, except cogs and wheels and cranes and 'moving platforms'? As places of human living these American

cities were dreadful affairs, drab and stupid, ugly and undistinguished."

"Well," resumed the Chief dubiously, "there's Pittsburgh?"

"Coal mines, coke ovens, and smutty steel works . . . a gloomy hole. We'll pass Pittsburgh."

The Chief laughed at the old man's summary disposal of the triumphs of American civilization.

"I am told there was a university out there, entirely housed in one immense skyscraper structure, but I suppose there is little of it left. . . . Chicago is mostly under water still and so is St. Louis—"

"Second rate even to the Americans!" the old man commented.

"Kansas City, Omaha, Denver," the Chief resumed more rapidly, "nothing much in any of them. I am afraid you will have to jump clear across the mountains to the coast of the Pacific before you will strike anything that might interest you. We haven't done much out there in old California except to send a few scouting expeditions to see if we could find the site of the city where they made those preposterous pictures the Americans were so fond of. We think it must have been buried under the ocean which has risen there as on this coast."

"So much the better: it would have been well for the Americans if Hollywood had been submerged when it started to grind out those miles of travesties on life, their 'films,'—men and women imitating crude and coarse emotions, mostly sex emotions."

"Los Angeles?"

"Match-box bungalows and Christian Science temples!" The old man shook his head. "San Francisco might be worth looking at because of its beautiful situation, and I should like to see if those great cedar trees are still in existence. They survived the vicissitudes of thousands of years and might still

be flourishing, no longer the prey of American civilization,—the few the Americans did not cut down to make their match-box houses of. . . . But, Chief, why not first send us up into the great wilderness where they used to raise wheat and potatoes and then on into the Arctic Circle?”

“You would find little there except lakes and forests and the remains of glaciers, for many thousands of miles.”

“Very likely! Not so much changed from the days when they dug for gold and trapped wild animals up there. But I should like to see so much untamed and unspoiled wilderness. Over all the rest of the continent men left a smudge of selfish exploitation—but the northern wilderness they had barely scratched before they were driven back to the tropics.” . . .

So it was finally arranged that his “New World Tour,” as Felix ironically called his itinerary, should start for Winnipeg, then circling to the edge of Hudson Bay, following the old maps, should cross to Alaska and thence turning southwards along the Pacific coast should reach California—“The American Earthly Paradise”—and turning again at the great desert enter the arid southwest.

“Then you could circle back to New York through the southern states and—”

“Never! The Americans themselves devastated that pleasant part of their inheritance—they did not wait for the glaciers. . . . I have my own idea, Chief, of what to do after leaving California,” the old man smiled mysteriously. “Besides I may get so tired of covering empty space by that time I shall just run back to Africa. You must realize I am no American, who loved merely the sensation of being moved through space!”

It was decided that the start should be made the day after the morrow, to give ample time for preparation of maps and to “let the girls have another look at New York. They might never have such a good chance!” . . .

As Felix and Veronica stood on the terrace later that night watching the stars through the tops of the tall pines and listening to the melodies coming from distant Zanzibar, Felix remarked to his companion with a sudden lift of emotion,—

“Now I shall begin to enjoy the New World, with you to see things with. It has been inexpressibly dreary, my dear, the emptiness, the sordidness of these people.”

Veronica’s light laughter mocked him.

“You take them too seriously, dear. They didn’t take themselves so! or they couldn’t have done the funny, crazy things they did. You must look on the trip as a lark the way my girls do and you will get much more from it.”

“But I can’t help thinking what might happen to us if we got going that way. There is no telling! We might end in a Detroit or a Chicago.”

His voice grew more serious as he repeated,—“For there is so little difference between us and them—only that difference is profound. What if we reverted?”

“To the monkeys? We shan’t, my dear,” Veronica pronounced positively, serenely. “Do you see any signs of it in the Expeditionary Force here?”

“Only that they sometimes talk like those ancient wind-bags—even the Chief himself.”

“Oh, talk! You mustn’t mind how they talk. They don’t ever *feel* like the old Americans—and that’s what matters!”

In the modern world preparations for such an extensive survey of an uninhabited continent as Felix designed could be quickly made without any of the great commotion that accompanied similar undertakings in the ancient world. The modern mind disliked above all else fuss and clutter and futile movement. A calm efficiency as of one who knew exactly what he intended to do in any affair was the dominant mood.

Coöperation and order being characteristic of the modern mind from long habit, complex enterprises requiring the exact collaboration of numerous persons were quickly and quietly effected.

So while Veronica played about in the dead city with her group of companions, sometimes accompanied by the old Greek (he took them to the great bank vault in the cavernous depths of the lower city which had made a deep if sad impression upon him on his former visit), the specially designed and constructed airship in which they were to survey the continent was overhauled and provisioned. Most of the foodstuffs being in concentrated dehydrated form could be packed in light containers sealed to prevent deterioration. Owing to the careful manner of preparation these food materials could be quickly returned to their natural consistency and bulk, much like those Chinese flowers which when placed in water take on the form and substance native to them. A package of dried grapes dipped in liquid became once more in size and taste like the ripe fruit plucked from the vine. The advances made in the treatment of materials, together with the simplification in diet of modern people, had rendered the food problem nearly negligible. Food supplies sufficient for several years were stored in underground warehouses almost anywhere and easily despatched at need to places temporarily threatened by a shortage. . . . As the ship would never be out of touch with the rest of the world no matter where it might wander and ordinarily drew its motive power directly from the sun (indirectly by means of wireless when obliged) there was no necessity for much of the bulky fuels and other paraphernalia of ancient voyages. The personal baggage of the travelers also required little space, as each one carried in a small handbag all that would be needed for the voyage and looked after it himself or herself.

A dozen persons comprised the entire crew of the airship, which was in charge of the alert young Commander who had brought Felix to the New World and later Veronica and her party of young women. There were in addition to these and the crew a few scientists and archæologists summoned from Felix's laboratory in Khartoum and a small labor band of boys and girls for cabin service, although most of the necessary household tasks would be done by Veronica and her companions. (There were no merely idle persons these days, no amateurs and unpurposed persons such as largely made up the drifting population of the ancient world, no "tourists," sight-seers, haunters of pleasure resorts, nobody "just running across" anywhere to spend their days or weeks recovering from some imaginary ailment or trying to fill the vacuum of empty lives. Everybody from small child to old man or woman having some function to perform in the close-knit yet flexible fabric of contemporary society would have felt quite lost and astray on a mere pleasure jaunt; the modern world had discovered that idleness could not beget happiness, and that the pursuit of distraction was the surest way of boring oneself. Stray women especially, with no attachments and nothing to do except eat rich food and play bridge or sit lethargically swapping scandals and recounting amorous incidents of their early lives, no longer were the familiar feature of the landscape they had become before the final débâcle of Christian civilization.) . . .

The ship rose swiftly from the tumbled mounds that marked the site of New York to a height of only a few hundred feet above the earth, which it maintained for the sake of giving a closer view of the country, and settled into a leisurely speed of hardly more than three hundred miles an hour. The sun shone from a cloudless summer sky of steely blue, while below the airship a carpet of unbroken tree foliage undulated over hills and valleys. They voyaged thus suspended between two

vast seas, one of a light green like seawater and the other of a pale blue. The cortex of the airship being transparent, yet selective of the sun's rays, only the more desirable elements of light penetrated to the living quarters of the ship.

For a while the passengers hung out of the observation booths on either side of the airship, watching the soft green tapestry beneath them unroll, much as passengers on an antiquated ocean liner used to look over the side of their wallowing craft watching the swirling spume thrown up by the iron hulk as it plowed its twenty or twenty-two knots an hour through viscous seawater. Like those ancient wayfarers the present company became hypnotized after a time by the monotonous unrolling of green forest beneath, occasionally broken by a spot of gleaming water of some lake or larger river. In Felix's private compartment was hung a large map of the northern hemisphere colored with the names of ancient cities and points of interest, over which as on the dial of a huge clock moved a mechanical pointer indicating the momentary position of the airship in relation to the earth. Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, the names sped by in a meaningless succession as the noiseless ship winged its way across the wilderness that once had been the "Empire State" of the ancient Americans. . . . "Buffalo," the Commander announced through his megaphone, "change trains for Niagara Falls!"

"That joke was intended for young people like you," the old man said to Edith who was tidying up his quarters. "The Falls were once the national honeymoon resort: every American girl was supposed to have seen Niagara Falls at least once in her life. Look! There they are below us now."

A feathery cloud of white spume rose from under the big airliner and a dull roar came up from the narrow canyon.

"Hardly more than the falls in Mountain College," Veronica commented in disappointment. "And there are no hotels, sus-

pension bridge, hack men and all the other accessories one reads of."

"Either the glaciers have worn down the lake levels above the Falls—or as usual the Americans exaggerated the magnificence of them."

"All the same they are very pretty," the blond girl remarked wistfully. "I'd like to spend a few weeks there if I could."

"Perhaps you would like us to let you off somewhere so that you could try Robinson Crusoeing it with your young man to help?"

"Who were they?" the girl asked naïvely.

"Oh, a popular myth. The ancients were always trying to imagine what living would be like in a less crowded and less mechanized environment than what their world had become. There is a curious literature about these imaginary paradises. We don't have to waste time dreaming of such things because we are so busy making them come true around us."

"I'd like it, just the same, starting out in some wild place like those lovely Falls and trying to live one's life . . . without interference from anybody."

"So would I!" her lover added promptly.

"Let's drop them overboard at the first stop," Veronica laughed. "They don't need us."

"We'll wait until we reach the real wilderness farther north where they can rough it a bit. It would be too easy here—they'd be running down to New York to see their friends or sending for some dainties."

"No, we shouldn't!" the gentle blond girl retorted with unexpected spirit.

"Just what would you two do, off alone in the wilderness like that?" Felix asked.

"First we'd make a house," the young man suggested.

"And plant some flowers," Edith added.

"You can do that anywhere at home in Africa—you don't have to go into the American wilderness to make your nest!"

"But that's so different. It's easy there, while here there would be risks, danger," the girl retorted as she and her young man moved away.

"Did you note that, Veronica?" the old man remarked dryly, after the couple had left the room. "We have made it too safe and too easy and comfortable, the life they are born into."

"Oh, they've got the pip," Veronica replied testily.

"The pip?"

"Children's disease, longing for the moon, wanting to hold hands with another girl or boy in the dark and all that. . . . Didn't you ever have it when you were young? When my girls get that way and act like a hen that wants to set I turn them into the nearest crèche or kindergarten to work it off or send them to some uncomfortable station in the interior. There is plenty of wild life near home without running to a New World to find it."

Felix's mind ignoring this flippancy shot to another angle of the subject,—

"Perhaps that's what is troubling so many of our young people? They want the spice of danger in their lives. We've made it too easy, too smooth for everybody. We'll have to invent some bumps, airpockets in their lives so that they will feel themselves struggling against a bitter fate, heroic, battling with the gods and that sort of melancholy mania."

"I'll give those kids enough to think about to keep their minds from mooning," Veronica grunted unsympathetically.

"You'll do nothing of the kind, my dear. They are my guests at present, specially invited, and I want to observe them awhile longer. They may explain some things that have been bothering me latterly. For I am not yet too old to get new ideas."

Veronica accepted the rebuke with an amused smile. As presently the ship which had slackened speed above the diminished Falls swung back into its silent flight over the unbroken wilderness of Canada, Felix observed,—

“If this had been Asia Minor or India—or even Southern Europe—this flat forest land! There one would have the feeling of passing over mighty civilizations, dead and buried, where something of supreme human interest once existed. In their way they must have been beautiful too, and curious stories and legends still lie thick about their ashes. . . . I never passed above ancient Jerusalem or the site of Troy without a vision backward into the long spaces of human history. . . . But what ever happened here that one can remember now? There are thousands of these dead cities as like as two trees in the forests that cover their remains. If one laid bare on the dissecting table the entire teeming civilization of this North American continent, one could hardly differentiate one ancient ‘center’ from the next. Now they are all just so much dust and carbon dioxide. . . . But when one travels over ancient Mesopotamia or Egypt, even China, one’s imagination is stirred and one sees the long story of man’s endless pilgrimage upon this earth!”

“They too are just dust and carbon dioxide today,” Veronica jeered.

“Maybe so. But at least they *lived* once, lived with conviction and passion. . . . Perhaps that is what is troubling the phlegmatic Edith and her young man. Instead of the pip as you call it!” . . .

The airship was now swiftly crossing a vast inland sea whose still gray surface reflected the glare of the midday sun. The old man dropped off into one of his casual naps, which bridged conveniently the less interesting interludes of his life. When he awoke the scene had markedly changed. They had reached

the region of retreating glaciers, which lay like primeval monsters athwart a twisted and contorted land, rising here to sharp gaunt mountain ridges, sinking again into the ooze of vast swamps. The airship flew low over this barren land of ice and swamp to permit a clear view of the strange contours produced by the glaciers.

"The earth is being remolded in the potter's hand," the old man exclaimed to Veronica. "This is far beyond the puny efforts of human engineering, such a transformation of watersheds, of mountain ranges and lakes, by the slow, relentless force of nature. Before it hardens into definite forms for another few thousand years, possibly the Hudson Bay of the ancient maps will be joined to the Great Lakes already vastly extended in area, and these in turn will empty their waters through a mightier river than the old Mississippi into the former Gulf of Mexico, thus effectually splitting the North American continent into two sections and redistributing its watersheds and climatic conditions. An improvement much desired by its former restless inhabitants, but never seriously undertaken for all their engineering skill and love of grandiose enterprises. . . . Incidentally these glaciers must have churned up more of those 'precious' metals which the ancients always sought for so feverishly. They had already picked over most of this desolate region in their search for gold and silver, but that lure will hardly tempt our people into the frozen North."

"It is growing very chilly," Veronica remarked, being still clothed in the scanty African costume she had brought with her from Khartoum.

"We'll try to get you some furs at the first stop, my dear."

"When will that be?" she asked. "Are we going on straight to the North Pole? I don't see the use of spending much time among these glaciers. No human beings could have survived long in such a cold and cheerless land!"

As though to contradict her remark, there came through the wall beside her the excited tones of the Commander,—

“Come up here on the control deck! . . . There are some strange people in sight below. Esquimaux, I think they must be!”

“No use, my dear, in being too positive about anything in this world,” the old man observed as they hurried up the ramp outside their quarters to join the Commander on the deck above.

The airship had dipped to within a few hundred feet of a snow-covered plain, glittering dazzlingly under the rays of the sun which although by the ship's clock it was past nine o'clock in the evening still hung high on the western horizon. Almost directly beneath them was a small group of short men and women clad in the skins of animals, with long black hair streaming from their exposed heads.

They were gazing upwards at the big airship poised just over their heads, and the observers in the ship could detect the wonder and the consternation expressed on their fat and somewhat flattened faces. Presently as though overcome by terror some of the women covering their eyes with their hands ran shrieking towards nearby holes in the snow mounds and disappeared from sight within. A few of the men followed more slowly, but others stood their ground.

“Move on a bit,” Felix suggested to the Commander, “somewhat away from their settlement and try to make a landing.”

The old man was greatly moved by the sight of the queer little figures in skins on the snowy plain below the ship. It was as if this handful of human beings in the midst of a vast waste of snow and ice had proved some cherished theory. The spectacle stirred him far more than the dead city of New York! Also the silent Mongolian girl, Iris, seemed strangely excited.

Something within her being had stirred, from the remote and forgotten past of her ancestors. . . .

The landing was effected with some difficulty on a flat plateau of snow near a large open body of water where the inhabitants kept their little boats made of skins and their hunting gear. The Esquimaux had remained huddled together near their homes while the landing operation was in process; when the strangers began to descend from the great airship through the lowered pontoon most of them either crawled within their holes or ran away in a panic plunging across the icy lagoons and disappearing behind ridges of snow and ice. A few bolder spirits, however, advanced to meet the newcomers. To them Iris, who had been among the first to step onto the snowy ground, advanced smiling as though going among waiting friends. When Veronica would have called the girl back, fearful of the weapons the Esquimaux held in their hands, spears made of bones, and bone knives, Felix protested,—

“Let her go! She may be our best ambassador.”

Iris advanced joyously, holding out her open arms as though to embrace newly found friends, her white wool robe floating from her shoulders, revealing her lovely figure. The natives observed her with evident curiosity, disarmed by her open manner, her confident young womanhood, and when she had reached them they surrounded her and soon a babel of sounds rose from the group. Gradually the more timid natives came from their holes or peered at the strangers from across the summits of ice floes. Then after a little time Iris broke from the encircling group encouraging with gestures its members to follow her, and thus led them on towards Felix and his companions and the other Africans.

“It is all right,” she said in her strange patois to Veronica. “They are afraid, of course, and they think we have come out

of the sky. . . . I tell them not to do them harm. . . . We all go to eat together.”

“So you know their language?” Veronica queried astonished.

“I not know the words,” the girl replied simply, “but I see what they think and they know what I think—that is all.”

The old man smiled, murmuring,—

“That is the beginning of language and of human society. . . . As we are the visitors, Iris, we had better sup with them, hadn't we?”

The visitors remained for nearly a week with the Esquimaux and when they departed took with them a young man and young woman who were courageous enough to venture aloft in the airship and see strange lands. Edith and her young man were left behind in the Esquimaux settlement, in exchange, at their urgent desire. Edith who had felt no such affinity with the queer little people as Iris had evinced from the first wished to stay and had persuaded her lover that he wished the same because she saw in this remote corner of the earth little likelihood of their being disturbed. They would be free, as she told Felix when he pointed out to the couple the uncertainty of their being able to return to Africa, even to the Expeditionary Force in New York, to make their own life exactly as they wanted it, without interference from others. If they tired of Esquimaux life they would have trained themselves to make their way southwards to one of the expeditionary posts—but that would not be for some time, Edith was confident.

“It was what I was looking for,” she admitted guilelessly, “a place where I shouldn't be likely to lose him, ever!”

“Well, when you are confident of not losing your man, you can bring him back home.” Veronica laughed a bit scorn-

fully. "But by that time he will have lost his peculiar skill as a ceramist and have to undertake some humbler work."

"Perhaps he will have gained other skills, my dear," the old man interposed. "Meanwhile you both can make yourselves useful by learning the language of these people and any like them you may come across up here in the ice, and observing their way of life and their customs and traditions. I should like to find out especially if they have any tribal record of the ancient white people; from the little Iris has been able to find out from them they apparently have no memories of American visitors although we know that their ancestors must have come often into contact with Europeans during several centuries (always to their detriment I might add). They have quite completely sloughed off whatever they got from the white men, diseases as well as implements or ways of living. I shall be interested to discover whether the same holds in other settlements of aborigines if we find any farther south as I expect we shall."

"However did they survive through the Ice Cap?" Veronica queried.

"I imagine just because they had taken so little from their white neighbors! They reverted to pure nature like the walruses and seals and bears. So long as any animal life could exist, a few degrees more or less of cold did not bother them as it did the softer white men . . . and as I have so often told you, even *they* might have endured through the Ice Age if they had been socially united and had used their energies in preparing for the struggle instead of dreaming of the 'good old times' soon to reappear without any effort on their part. The 'good old times' for the Esquimaux dated from long ago, before the white strangers had appeared and communicated to them disease, and what was worse, their psychology. Fortunately for them the Esquimaux had nothing the Americans

valued, neither lands nor treasures of gold or oil, and so they were largely left alone in their icy wilderness, to survive or perish as might be. . . . They survived, as we have found out." . . .

When Iris learned that the young couple were to remain with her new friends she asked Veronica for permission to do the same, pleading justly that she was better equipped for the ordeal than either of the others who were to stay. Veronica brought her request to Felix with the comment,—

"Why not? She seems at home here with these queer little fat people, and she is not likely to make a good mating in Khartoum, too odd in looks and too dumb. I haven't seen her so alive since I brought her back from upper China, as she has been these last days among the snow people!"

Felix, ordinarily so amenable to any suggestion from his trusted companion, demurred.

"There are other opportunities for Iris," he said.

"What?"

"I can't say now. . . . But the discovery of these descendants of the old Esquimaux makes me more confident of other even more important discoveries as we proceed southward out of the zone where the ancient Americans exterminated every native thing, as we go into Central America. . . . Do you realize how intimate Iris has become with this strange people, how easily she picks up their words; not merely that (which might be due to linguistic skill merely) but how sympathetic and understanding she is with them? They always turn first to her as to one who will comprehend not only what they are saying but what they are thinking!"

"I don't find her so very companionable," Veronica replied with a trace of inevitable jealousy, "as you seem to! . . . Besides what use will her special talent with these people be among another race?"

"Ah, I am not sure they will be of another race!" the old man replied with a fine smile. "It is just that I want to find out, and Iris will help me better than any of our ethnologists or anthropologists! From watching the way she takes them and the way they take her I can determine—a great many things. No, we can't afford to lose Iris here—send her to me."

Iris submitted passively, as she submitted to all the decrees of her fate including her being taken from her home to the African college and thence to the New World. But her somber, rather expressionless features became sad when the great airship one dawn rose majestically into the endless day of the North and leaving the strange little people, now gathered together to witness the departure of the amazing phenomenon (which they still believed had dropped down on them from some remote world out of space) and then as the ship heading west by south winged across the grim surface of the frozen earth towards the Pacific coast she became as always dumb, stoic, accepting of fate. Felix, who kept her near him much of the time, talked to her of what he hoped to find in the days ahead of them on their tour of the continent.

"There must be other pockets of human life hidden away in the more propitious recesses of the mountains," he said. "Not Americans, not the white races who never belonged in this hemisphere, but descendants of the aborigines, miscalled Indians, remotely related to those Esquimaux. . . . They were scattered and oppressed throughout the centuries of European dominance. But we know that they endured, often in a pitiful and degraded state, never coalescing with their conquerors—any more than you, Iris, could merge yourself wholly with us in Africa! . . ."

"Who knows? We may find that once the heavy burden of the white man's lusts was lifted from this continent these forgotten fragments of its ancient inhabitants may have raised

their heads again and resumed the character that their conquerors had tried in vain to exterminate. I hope so! It would help incalculably in the determination to be made of the future of this part of the world. . . . It would be like discovering the key piece in an intricate puzzle, a link long sought and not yet found, without which the picture can never be completed. . . . I have great hopes, and if I am not mistaken you will be my greatest help in finding the key!"

The girl listened silently, apathetically, but in the somber light of her dark eyes the old man read an answering gleam of intelligence. She somehow understood what he was saying, as she had comprehended the minds of the strange little people they had left behind them amid the ice floes.

So silently like a meteor through empty space they cruised across the bare mountain chains that ribbed the continent, then down the forest-clad slopes of the Pacific (where the glaciers had more completely retreated than from the eastern coast) as far as old California, without encountering any traces of human habitations. They landed in the northern part of what the Americans had fondly called their "golden state" (less because of its wealth of sunshine and flowers than from the hoard of gold once found there), not in the expectation of discovering any interesting remains of American civilization. "Less here," Felix pronounced, "than almost anywhere else in the country because they built mostly of impermanent materials, more particularly because they were the kind of people they were, seeking an earthly paradise which they did not know how to enjoy—and always trying to exclude others from their paradise such as it was! A despicably selfish people in a selfish civilization, these old Californians were."

In this vein the old man discoursed at some length upon

the peculiar egotisms of the California breed of Americans and of their failure to create an enduring type of culture although given all the bounties showered on them by nature. Most of them were retired farmers and lesser bourgeois from the great central valley, who came hither to sun themselves in their declining years at small expense and infected the others with their "old age psychology." "The two best known California names in history are those of President Hokum who guessed wrong on every vital problem of his time and Tom Mooney who languished in prison a lifetime because Californians must have a victim to assuage their blood lust!" . . .

The airship had been berthed on a mountain slope between the sturdy trunks of two enormous cedars, and the party had dispersed through the glades formed by magnificent specimens of these great trees. It was, indeed, because of the leader's desire to know if any of this rare species had survived that they had made a stop in California.

"The sequoia and its lesser cousin the redwood were two of the chief exhibits of the American continent already established here when the predatory Europeans came hither. With their terrible instinct for exterminating anything not immediately convertible into wealth the Americans had very nearly succeeded in eradicating these noble trees, wastefully converting them into millions of ugly little shacks. . . . Fortunately a few survived and from them have sprouted these great forests of young trees—for a thousand years to the sequoia is but as yesterday! May they never encounter another enemy like the predatory American! and live on for at least another thousand years or more, here in solitude in their chosen habitat. They must be coeval with the ancestors of your Esquimaux friends, Iris."

The old man who was known for his love of trees and what trees symbolized in man's culture put his thin hands on the

soft shaggy trunk of a gigantic sequoia as though he might thus commune more intimately with the heart of the ancient tree. He strayed on by himself into the twilight of the forest, peering upwards to the lofty tips of feathery foliage far above the earth. When he returned from his ramble the Commander informed him that the airship had been in communication with one of the small scout ships in the neighborhood, whose captain had related the discovery of small settlements of aborigines to the southwest. The old man was greatly excited by the news.

“The pueblo Indians of New Mexico! There were a few of them still alive when American civilization ultimately cracked up, living more or less as their ancestors had always lived and cultivating the bottomlands of small rivers, clustered together in mud houses. Although much reduced in numbers and weakened by diseases contracted from their white conquerors, they had exhibited a remarkable tenacity of character. I suspected there might be survivals. . . . Tell that airscout, Commander, that we shall be on our way to him at once and get his bearings.”

“Oh,” Veronica protested, at this last command, “aren’t we going to see more of California? Santa Barbara? and that place where the queer picture plays used to be made and the land of oranges?”

“We have seen the best of California already,” the old man replied impatiently, “in this forest. . . . The rest would be mere waste of time, especially that picture town. Like their towns and cities, their pictures were all the same thing; see one and you see them all! My dear, I am anxious to get to the pueblos before dark. I remember quite well how they looked from a picture I found in an old American book I came across forty years ago. Somehow it stuck in my mind all these years, that one picture of an Indian village,—the severe mountains

around, the lofty plateau, and far away nestled close to some stream the little dust-colored mud houses with their strings of red peppers and their corn cribs. . . . I see it all now!"

Moved by the old man's enthusiasm which had been so noticeably lacking while they were in New York, Veronica smiled and turned to the waiting airship.

"Another time," she murmured.

"There can never be another time for me," the old man remarked a little solemnly. "We'll give you a peep of the celebrated Golden Gate, and the sand hills where they built their city,—no doubt it's still lying under the sand,—then go south over their fertile central valley which you can imagine covered with orange trees and oil derricks and pasteboard shacks, and then turn east across a small desert or two until we fetch up near old Santa Fé, where I take it the airscout is waiting for us." . . .

As the airship slowly rose from its berth among the giant sequoias and brushing their feathery green tops headed towards the great bay and the Golden Gate, the company exclaimed at the loveliness of the land now bathed in the afternoon sun, no longer disfigured by human excrescences and distortions.

"It *is* an Earthly Paradise once more," Felix admitted. "But if you let those old Americans in here it would not take them more than a couple of generations to ruin it as they did before. Singular the perversity of that race of 'individualists!' Their ancestors landed on a bleak and barren coast and suffered for a time all kinds of hardships. They dreamed a magnificent dream about freedom, all men being born equal, and all that, and proceeded straightway to ruin it. Fate opened to them the land of promise they longed for, and as soon as they got possession, as here in California, they did their best to deform Paradise, to build it nearer to the low desires of their hearts. Which would seem to prove that men cannot be trusted with

their own desires! As soon as they get them they at once abuse their privileges. . . .

“What did these Californians do with their Paradise? Try to keep others out of it, first. Then try to make everybody think alike, and eat their fruits and no others, and lastly debauched the rest of the country with their worthless picture plays! That, in brief, is the story of the Europeans’ conquest of the New World, which was their desired Paradise. What did they do with it, once they had complete possession? Exterminate its former inhabitants and rape its wealth and disfigure it. In the picturesque symbols of their old myth, finally God came with his angels of snow and ice and drove them from their Paradise and set his angels at its gate with drawn swords so that they might not come back. . . . And I am not sure that men can yet be trusted to enter those gates, which have at last been opened for us.”

Through the golden afternoon the airship sped eastwards across the empty desert places, which existed much as before between California and the continental mountain range. Towards dusk they drew near the high mesas around the pueblos, when the purple mist was falling across the mountains and thin streams of purple wood smoke were rising from the small mud dwellings scattered here and there in the parched land. These smoke streams marked the pueblos, those small Indian communities that had anciently existed near the streams, with their cornfields.

“Just as I remember it, just as I remember it all,” the old man murmured with increasing excitement, “even to the dusk gathering over the mountains and the thin spirals of purple smoke rising from the mud houses, which look so lonely in the immensity of the mountains and the plains. . . . But there are more of them than there were when the white Americans were here, more houses and more pueblos. They must have

grown in numbers, once their oppressors were removed, and they had recovered their fertile lands that had been stolen from them. . . . So now once more they fill the land with their own people, as many as it will support. Good, all good!"

It was true as the old man had surmised at his first view of the pueblos from the airship at twilight that these small Indian settlements had multiplied and now covered all those lands among the mountains which could adequately support life, the greater part of which had formerly been stolen from them by their tricky white neighbors. They had peacefully, contentedly lived through the ten centuries that had elapsed since the departure of their conquerors, pursuing the even tenor of their lives which had only been superficially influenced by the white men. They held their land and worked it in common and obeyed the rule of their elders, as they had always done. There had been, apparently, no intentional effort on their part to obliterate all traces of the Machine Age: machines had simply disappeared in time because there was no desire and no technology with which to replace them. Thus the hideous iron roofing that had once covered most of their adobe buildings having finally rusted away was replaced by rushes, and the tin gasoline cans once universally employed as containers had given way to older forms of pottery which they had always known how to make for themselves. Even tuberculosis and syphilis, gifts of their conquerors, had been outlived, together with the making of strong intoxicants. Once more restored to the only economy they had ever really understood, that of a simple agricultural communism, the physical condition of the race had vastly improved, nor had their one-time reputed ferocity reawakened.

"There is enough for all," an old chief made Felix understand in reply to his questioning. "Why kill?"

"In fact," Felix observed to Veronica who accompanied him on his visits to the pueblos where he spent his days, acquiring with his extraordinary facility with languages a rudimentary knowledge of the spoken dialect, "this old race allowed to live its life in its own traditional manner has achieved something very nearly like our own temperate anarchy, the 'live and let live' which the ancients praised so highly and so rarely practiced.

"Of course they lack our advanced technical skill and scientific knowledge as well as our historical information. They have literally been living out of the world for a thousand years, but apparently to much better advantage for themselves than when they were once forcibly made a part of it. Imagine the folly of the old Americans in thinking they could make good 'go-getters' of this people, trying to 'educate' them in the American fashion, and show them how to live! All the Americans really hoped to do with them was to render them harmless until they should entirely disappear as a people and then take complete possession of their land. And all they really bequeathed them was the horse, the cow, the ass. These they still have; everything else has disappeared with the strange dæmons from over the seas. They have made a myth of them, I gather, one of their tribal sagas not complimentary to the people who drank and breathed fire and killed all they touched—but in a larger sense just."

These pueblo Indians, more socialized than the isolated groups of Esquimaux, neither feared nor courted the strangers who had flown to them out of the western sky on the wings of an immense bird. They would fit them in time into their imaginative cosmogony, along with their nature gods and the myth about their white conquerors. They were as always courteous and friendly, showing the strangers freely their simple ways of life, everything but the sacred tribal mysteries



still performed under cover of night within windowless buildings. They were not interested in the airship, but their young men evidently were much attracted by Veronica's girls, a few of whom chose to remain with their Indian lovers when the prolonged visit of the airship drew to a close. Veronica was dubious of the advisability of leaving them behind, but Felix advised her not to interfere.

"If they stick to their principles and teach them some hygiene, especially sterilization and birth control—"

"These people need all that less than we do," her companion admonished. "Although they have gradually increased in numbers over a thousand years, not excessively so. I find no evidences of overpopulation, of poverty and disease and belligerency. I think they have managed the population question very well—or nature has managed it for them, so that they fit nicely into the environment with which they are familiar. . . . They tell me that far to the south there are many larger settlements of people, great cities in fact, where they may need your hygienic counsels, my dear. We shall make them a visit next. They are probably the descendants of those Indian peoples that the Spaniards tried to subdue and whose existence the Spaniards rendered miserable for four hundred years, until towards the end of the Machine Age this vigorous race began to assert itself. It will be most interesting to know whether they too have thrown off the white man's burden as thoroughly as have these simple pueblo folk!"

"And then?" queried Veronica, who was growing tired of discovering pockets of strange peoples and was restless to return to her African college.

"Then," smiled the old man tenderly, "we will wing our way back straight to Khartoum and try to digest what we have seen and learned."

The serene renaissance, the peaceful atmosphere of these remote Indian pueblos might have tempted Felix to make a longer stay among them had it not been for the reports of more considerable settlements to be found farther south in old Mexico and Central America. It was with regret, however, and peculiar affection that he looked down from the airship on leaving, upon the small brown mud houses with their stripes of red chili hanging from the roofs, their thin streams of blue wood smoke rising into the still morning air. There was something steadfast and eternal in their humble subordination to the grandeur of the vast mountain upland surrounding them on all sides. . . . As the airship winged almost due south, the scattered pueblos following intermittently the course of the waterways finally disappeared, when the streams themselves sank into the desert sands. An immense stretch of high arid plateau separated the pueblos from their more populous and advanced neighbors to the south. This part of northern Mexico had always been sparsely inhabited, a semi-desert, but now that mankind was no longer interested in digging precious metals from the earth or in maintaining huge flocks of animals to be killed for food, there was practically no use to be made of the lofty arid plateau, and no habitations to be seen there.

It was not until at noon of the first day the airship hung over the central valley of ancient Mexico that signs of human settlements began to appear. These were few and primitive much to the surprise of the old Greek, who had expected that the site of what had been America's largest and most beautiful Indian center would once more have become alive with the descendants of its old inhabitants. But here where the cruel Spaniards had most expressed his fanatical zeal and exercised his greed in the destruction of Indian civilization, where his descendants had attempted to crush out under the iron heel every sign of beauty and intelligence alien to them-

selves and set up the chief stronghold of their conquest, ruling the enslaved natives for three bloody centuries, there was now almost no sign of life either Spanish or Indian. The celebrated lakes, now completely dried, were merely gleaming beds of alkali. What had been on the arrival of the Conquistadores a garden and later under the degenerate rule of their descendants had been a populous and fertile country with immense fields of maguey and corn, was now little better than the arid desert through which they had passed all that morning. Pondering this phenomenon while the airship slowly circled around the Valley, enclosed by its bold mountain belt with the two snowy peaks of Ixtaccihuatl and Popocatepetl shining on the southern horizon, the old man came to the conclusion that another climatic change had taken place throughout this part of the continent, rendering it too bleak and arid for comfortable habitation. Consequently its inhabitants had been forced to retreat southwards to those warmer countries, which many centuries previously had been the centers of large populations of a high civilization.

Along with such a material explanation of the present abandonment of the ancient Valley of Mexico there might well be another, more human reason for deserting this scene of former triumph. It was here that the hated Spanish had most heavily laid their hands, here that they had most thoroughly imposed their tyrannous will and molded the Indian to their own form. It was just here within the circling mountain walls, the seat of Aztec and allied civilizations, that the white conqueror had mingled most commonly with his dark slaves, producing the debased *mestizo*, four-fifths Indian slave and one-fifth Spanish slave-driver, who towards the close of the Christian era had tried to rule the country. And finally it was here that the Spanish zealots had most completely imposed their religion, building churches and convents and monasteries to

the glory of that Christ whose teachings they defied in every act. What more natural then, if, as Felix thought most likely, the Indian when released from his four centuries of bondage had consciously endeavored to erase from his people every trace of their long servitude, and had willingly abandoned that part of the land where the conqueror's influence had been deepest and most oppressive?

The Indian, who had already begun his painful emancipation before the white race had disappeared from this western continent, reasserting himself in many subtle ways, even getting back a few remnants of his fathers' lands from the control of aliens, Spanish and North Americans, had shown in divers ways unmistakably a deep racial will to arise and be himself. . . . As the airship rising high above the Valley finally passed south between the two great volcanoes, Felix explored imaginatively the possibilities of such a racial resurrection in the civilization he confidently expected to discover once removed from the old centers of Spanish influence. And as soon as they had crossed the mountains that hemmed in the Valley and its ancient capital there were increasing signs of settlement, cultivated fields and clusters of adobe buildings, also considerable forests. (The Spanish had almost wholly denuded Mexico of trees as the English had stripped all but the Canadian wilderness!) Sailing slowly above this pleasant country the voyagers were able to detect indications of former towns and hamlets, even an occasional weather-beaten church tower, although the mass of the inhabitants no longer seemed to dwell in cities, but in country hamlets and the open fields, thus showing a state of peace and ease among them.

Before nightfall at the old man's suggestion the Commander brought his ship to anchor in a wide open plain, where corn was growing in green abundance, not far from one of the church towers which Felix was curious to examine. A crowd

of people, of all ages, surrounded the airship and assisted its crew in anchoring it firmly to some immense tree trunks nearby. They seemed much more alert, more responsive, than the dwellers in the pueblos, chattering among themselves and gesticulating, and laughing. In their company the African visitors went to a nearby village, which was hidden beneath green trees, with water pleasantly trickling along the paths and gushing into a central fountain. Strangers and natives came together into the wide plaza in front of the old Spanish church, which was shaded by several wide-branching trees and adorned with vivid flowers. . . .

"These people were always fond of flowers and children and music, three good things; even the mercenary Spanish could not entirely crush these wholesome instincts from the enslaved Indians. . . . I remember reading some book about the life in Indian villages during the most debased period of American machine degeneracy by an envious victim of American culture, in which he dwelt with delight on the Indian love of flowers and children, of dancing and *fiestas* as they called them then, merrymakings and all that. Apparently they have not lost these tastes."

The lichened walls of the old church had been strangely metamorphosed into an out-of-doors theater, which was just now being decorated for some form of ceremonial or festivity. The stage had been erected in the apse where formerly a high altar had stood, and strangely enough in the niche once occupied by the gaudy, tinsel image of the Virgin there now stood the figure of a woman with dark coloring and broad Indian features, pleasing, nevertheless, in a simple human way. Some boys and girls were draping this figure with wreaths of roses and honeysuckle; one band of pure red roses circled her full breasts. . . .

"They seem to have reëstablished their idol worship,"

Veronica remarked a bit condescendingly as she observed critically the flowery lilac canopy of "Virgin's mantle" blossoms woven around the wooden figure.

"These people never lost the habit of image worship. They merely transferred their devotions from the rather hideous stone idols of their own temples to the almost equally ugly plaster saints introduced by their Christian conquerors. Fortunately, for the most part, they did not take these latter seriously,—none but the Virgin, whom I suspect they have transformed from the Mother of God to the Mother of Mankind! An excellent substitution, too. For a people so fundamentally natural and simple in their instincts it must have been impossible to comprehend the mystery of the Virgin Birth and to have revered an unmated woman because she was reputed to have given birth to a God. In their experience it simply did not happen that way! and so once the priests were removed they must have rearranged the legend to fit their sense of reality. . . . A virgin was never admirable to them because of her virginity, but merely as a potential mother; these people have kept her real meaning and purpose; and they honor all motherhood and womanhood in her image. A great touch, which the ancient church would have adopted had it been really alive during the last five hundred years of its existence as an institution." . . .

The Indians went about their festival without paying special attention to the party from the airship, merely glancing at them from time to time and smiling. Both men and women of all ages seemed equally engaged in the celebration. Some were cutting from colored cloths figures of strange beasts (in one of which Felix identified a mythical concept of the white man!) while others were hanging streamers of red and purple blossoms from wall to wall of the old church. Outside under the trees many straw-covered booths had been set up in

which were served to all—and to the strangers also—simple foods made of corn and chopped meats and sweetened drinks. (The use of the old Indian drink, *pulque*, seemed to have lapsed in this part of the country, probably due to the abandonment of the maguey-growing plains.) There was therefore no intoxication, which as Felix observed was in pleasant contrast to all the reports of Spanish Mexico.

“Drink was probably the common refuge in their utter misery,” he remarked, “as with most drunken peoples among the ancients. Once relieve people from the horrors of an exploited existence as slaves and they naturally abandon the habit of submerging themselves artificially in oblivion. There never could be a drink problem among a happy people!” . . .

As the night drew on flares of vegetable oils were lighted, and the crowd increased, with the coming from the surrounding fields of the laborers and their families. All these newcomers ate and drank at the booths and, surprisingly enough, no money seemed needed to provide for their entertainment, no more than it was required in Khartoum. Observing this free largess of food and drink the old man remarked,—

“They were always at heart communists, these Indians! The first sign of effective revolt against their mongrel rulers was the illegal seizure of land, not for ownership, but for produce. They felt—as their ancestors always had felt—that the earth belonged for the season to him who got a crop out of it; they broke down the European private property system by squatting anywhere they liked and planting a piece of land. No doubt they have kept up that excellent habit and enlarged it. All their fields, I should not be surprised to find, belong to the village and are worked together for the common good. So everybody feels he has a perfect right to share in the produce!” . . .

After some time had elapsed, the plaza gradually filled with

grotesque animal figures in masks, dancing and playing on curious wooden instruments that oddly enough suggested European musical instruments. For these southern Indians had not so much banned the instruments and customs of their former conquerors as entirely transformed them to their simpler needs. (The single useful acquisition from the Spanish régime was the humble donkey! The little gray burro, the fast and slow transport of the country, was more in evidence than ever before. Lines of them stood patiently outside the plaza wall or huddled together under one of the big trees.) The actors in animal masks and the audience of dark Indians in white cotton clothes and leather sandals, a costume worn by their ancestors for many thousands of years, mingled in the dances and mimic combats on the stage. The sharp differentiation between actor and spectator had broken down. Even the children took part in the fun and romped in and out among the moving figures, teasing the bull maskers and the bear maskers, imitating their gestures, and playing on tiny wooden flutes. . . . The merrymaking kept up until a late hour under the full moon as though nobody felt the urge of fatigue or of pressing duties on the morrow to cut short the festivity. Gradually, however, as the moonlight faded the throng decreased and the plaza became deserted, until the oil flares burning before the flower-decked figure of the transformed Virgin were all that remained of the joyous scene.

Felix and his companions had discovered that these Indians spoke a language of which none of them understood a single word. It was not Spanish. However, towards the end of the festivities an old man approached them mumbling a few words which the quick ear of Felix recognized as having some resemblance to Spanish. Following him the strangers were introduced to a clean guest house on one side of the plaza, where they understood they were expected to spend the night.

The old man, they gathered, was some sort of teacher or village elder in authority. Iris, who had mingled more freely with the Indians than had the others, reported with unwonted animation that she could recognize certain words used by them, as having an affinity with the language of her Esquimau friends in the far North. "They are not the same," she said, "nor are they the same as the words of my people in Northern China—but we think the same way about the same things. . . . One can understand, in time."

"It is easy to understand," the old man agreed, "when the intentions of both are friendly and without guile. . . . It is clear that our hosts wish us to be their guests, at least for the night, and as they have already shared their food with us I see no reason why we should not accept this additional hospitality."

His happiness in their adventure was obvious. Like a good play, the all-America tour was steadily ascending in interest and significance.

The farther south the party of Africans penetrated in the ensuing weeks the more highly cultivated and populous became the country they traversed until on reaching ancient Guatemala they found themselves in the midst of a civilization almost on a level with that of the more remote provinces of their own continent. Here were large stone buildings. Many of the ancient temples had been restored, not for religious rites, but for use as public buildings of common resort. The noisome swamps and jungles that had caused death and disease at the time of the European invasion had again been drained and restored to agriculture. The tropical climate, modified by the considerable elevation of the central plateau, now more nearly resembled what it had been three thousand years before during the flourishing era of Mayan civilization than what it had been

when the Spanish conquerors first penetrated these fever-haunted jungles. The beauty of the region with its many lakes of colored water, its magnificent trees, the suavity of the people and the comfort of their lives, the high degree of artistic effort in the crafts as well as the intriguing traces of an ancient culture to be observed wherever they turned charmed the modern Africans.

Even Veronica forgot her anxiety to return to Mountain College in the interest and delight of their daily lives as guests of the Indian community. An ancient Mayan temple of magnificent spaces and admirable design was assigned to the strangers for their use, and a numerous retinue of Indians was placed at their disposal. Everything they saw and touched was novel,—the table ware, the feather adornments, the metal work, the furniture,—and not least the soft rounded features of the Indians, who had lost any trace of European blood they might have had. Here the presence of the white conqueror had neither been forgotten nor fused into a myth: his domination for several centuries was distinctly remembered and recorded in their historical literature. It might have been expected that these memories of a race which had perpetrated so much cruelty and caused their people so much woe might be filled with bitterness, oddly enough the result had been quite other: the Indians regarded their white oppressors as insane and ridiculous, and used them frequently as the stuff of comedy and satire. Some of the wittiest plays Felix had ever seen were a series of dramatized incidents of the white man's rule, concluding with a study of North American "Marines" (or naval soldiers) and their attempted "pacification" of a neighboring Indian country, revealing in delicate satire the preposterous pretensions of a racial superiority glorified by an old English bard named Kipling. It was named appropri-

ately,—“The Indian Burden,”—and concluded with a neat picture of “the Great White Throne in Washington,” where some drunken and slovenly legislators, aided by corrupt banana lobbyists and an odd-lot selection of American bankers examined a delegation of Indians as to their “capacity for self-government.”

It was first decided that it would be “a crime against humanity” to permit these benighted savages to seek their own salvation unaided by the blessings of machinery and guided by the superior intelligence of the white men with their Marines in the ways of making money. This was the argument of the banana trust lobbyists and the bankers. But at the last moment the counterproposition of the sugar representatives, who argued that if the wretched natives were given political independence their chief product might then be excluded from the United States by high tariffs to the immense benefit of the sugar interests, carried the day, and the Great White Throne in Washington solemnly decreed the Freedom of the Indian (with certain ingenious provisions that would still keep this “undeveloped” race wholly dependent on their former masters and enslaved economically). . . . Felix chuckled appreciatively over this conclusion, which cleverly illustrated the famous Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy, a peculiar form of moral astigmatism that permitted its possessor to see only what he deemed to be for his own best interest at the moment, while ascribing his motives to his love of God and righteousness.

“Well, well,” he remarked to his intelligent Indian companion (for by now he could make himself pretty well understood), “between the cruelty and the bigotry of the Spaniard and the hypocrisy and the greed of the Anglo-Saxon there was little to choose—but I should have preferred the former if I had had to live with either one!”

"Fortunately," replied the suave Indian, "we no longer have to live under either tyranny."

"Ah, fortunate indeed!" Felix agreed heartily.

To the shrewd old Greek's constant amazement the resurrected Indian had developed his own civilization without the use of the machine, which had always been alien to his genius. His forefathers had built their massive temples, transporting immense stones great distances without even the aid of draft animals, carving their surfaces into ingenious and occasionally beautiful patterns with simple obsidian and copper tools. Now that he was free to follow his bent he seemed to take pride in creating useful and lovely objects with his hands unaided by complicated tools. Quantity no longer interested him—it never had in fact: even the Mexican slave in the Machine Age had preferred to make one chair or one bracelet or one pot rather than turn out a dozen all as like as two peas, to the despair of his exploiter. Thus he had got a satisfaction in his labor, which the machine-ridden Americans had quite lost. The household arts had become once more the personal delight and satisfaction of both the user and the producer. . . .

"Just as with us," Felix explained to Veronica, "with the difference that we have emerged from machine control, having mastered the machine and subdued it to our own ends, while this people have arrived nearly at the same cultural plane by ignoring it. They haven't our airships and rockets and invisible rays; new amalgams and all the rest of our advanced technical achievements, but they have sufficient for their needs of everything essential, as well as peace and content and happiness. What more could anybody ask for? I am not sure but that in developing solar energy as we have so that we can race around the globe in company with the sun we have introduced an element of mere restlessness which unless strictly

controlled may yet be our undoing—as it was with those dreadful Americans in New York!”

“There are some things these people might copy from us,” Veronica retorted. (She was not as ready as her old friend to discard rapid transit and the other blessings of an advanced technology, with the possibility they gave of gratifying one’s every physical whim.) . . . “They will have to look after the birth rate more closely unless they want to be swamped with babies and spend most of their time trying to support a mass of low-grade human beings. . . . Their ancestors were helped out by an occasional pestilence or famine or when they got overlusty a lively war and as you know a habit of eating their enemies. But these people are too amiable for such forms of keeping the population down, and they breed like mice or rabbits. . . . I have seen women with as many as eight children, all healthy little beggars.”

“That has ever been the danger for people living in warm countries,” Felix sighed. “In the old days eight would have been a small family! Even their Spanish conquerors got thirty or more illegitimate children from the native women. But the Indian stock has become less prolific fortunately and their monogamic habits tend to restrict the birth rate somewhat. So far they have not suffered because they have had such vast areas to colonize with an excess population. But I agree with you, my dear; they must do something about it soon—or all the fine results from these centuries of freedom will begin to disappear. And their hygiene should be improved so as to reduce the mortality rate, which as always is too high.”

“I should say so!” Veronica snorted vehemently. “Your fine Indians are altogether too prone to regard their women as brood sows. I don’t like the outlook for women at all—they are still restricted to household arts and the making of babies.”

Felix smiled at his comrade’s ardent feminism.

"They look happy enough and wise," he commented. "But what can we do about it, my dear? I have already spoken to some of their chiefs, who do not seem concerned. They still think of babies as a source of national wealth like the ancient Germans."

"We must get them to start birth control clinics. They were needed at the end of the Christian period and how much more now! I mean to leave here the rest of my girls to begin the work and send over others as soon as we get back. . . . Then will come sterilization, of course."

"Better go slow," warned the old man. "Do you remember all those regenerated Virgins whose statues we have seen in every village? The Indians still worship the fertile woman as the symbol of life and happiness. . . . That instinct goes deep in human nature, even among our own highly educated boys and girls as you know. . . . Let them arrive at the idea from their own necessities."

Veronica shrugged her still lovely shoulders.

"You are always so tender of the sexual instinct!" she scoffed.

"Because it is so deep rooted, so connected with what is best as well as what is vilest in humanity," the old man replied gravely. "It takes a skillful surgeon to put his knife into the womb of humanity without destroying something as precious as life itself."

"I know what I shall do! . . . I have been talking to Iris and the other girls and I mean to have a meeting of all the leading women here and in other large centers and explain our treatment of the problem and ask them to help us start life clinics in every settlement."

Felix shrugged his thin shoulders patiently, well aware of the proselytizing fervor of his dear friend, which no protest even by him might control.

"I'd leave it to Iris," was the extent of his advice. "She and

that young chief of this country seem pretty close. Let her start the new idea through him. There's still room for a few more babies in this part of the world, fortunately, and those one sees look pretty healthy and happy."

"Those that live," the inexorable Veronica corrected. . . .

At the moment Iris and the young chief to whom Felix had referred appeared, coming from the great temple in front of which the two friends were seated. Iris's inscrutable face seemed to be gravely considering something that her young companion was urging on her. In spite of the young Indian's vivacity of expression and animated gestures there was a noticeable racial resemblance between him and the Mongolian girl at his side, which impressed Felix and Veronica. Both were of about the same height and of the same somewhat stocky form, and while the young man's coloring was darker than that of the girl, less the tint of old ivory, it was a matter of degree rather than of quality. And their long narrow eyes were of the same shape and equally opaque in color.

"Somewhere in the distant past," Felix murmured to his friend, "the ancestors of those two were close neighbors."

"No doubt of it! . . . They are well matched," she added judiciously with the appraising eye of a specialist in such matters. "I don't believe in violent contrasts of blood as much as some do. . . . What are you two plotting?" she demanded as the young people drew near.

"I am persuading her to stay here with me among my people," the young man replied promptly.

"And what does Iris say?" Felix asked.

For answer Iris looked directly into the old man's face as a slow smile trembled on her lips.

"I like it here," she said simply.

"Well," Veronica interposed, "there's plenty you could do to help these people, especially the women, if you decide to

remain. . . Chief, we were just talking of that, what your people need. The state of nature has lasted pretty nearly long enough. Soon you will have more people on your hands than you can take care of; the inevitable result will be that the strong will begin to eat the weak . . . then wars and the rest of the old coil. Better take hold in time!"

The young Indian smiled skeptically with a wide gesture intended to indicate the bigness of his world. In his close fitting tunic woven in ancestral fashion of brightly colored bird feathers which rippled iridescently in the sun, he was a handsome, confident creature.

"There is still plenty to eat and much land to cultivate when we want it!" he remarked.

"But, Chief," Veronica protested vivaciously, "you haven't mastered the first rudiments of the population problem. What is the good of more and more people crowding into the world? What you need are better people—and fewer of them, not just masses of two-legged animals!"

"Babies are good," the Chief drawled, with a side glance at Iris.

"But some babies are better than others," Veronica interjected. "Oh, they are hopeless! Iris, you will have your troubles—unless you revert and go Indian!"

"I shall not go Indian," the girl protested with quiet confidence, "even though I live with an Indian."

"See you don't—or he will be giving you a lot of rivals." . . .

Felix, whose curiosity about the diverse ways in which men managed their lives and ordered their common interests was insatiable, had strolled off with the young Indian chief, questioning him on many matters that had attracted his attention during his stay in this remote American land. The intelligent young man was able to understand and convey his own ideas

more fully than his fellows because of his intimacy with Iris. He was one of the numerous Indian leaders, each community however small having its own local chief who held the position for life providing he gave no cause for complaint and was generally approved. These local chiefs had quite autocratic powers, again subject to the approval of their communities. There were no overlords or great kings—had not been any for many centuries, Felix was informed.

The ancient custom of feudal lordship and vassals had lapsed because supreme power entrusted to one man stimulated unhealthy ambitions and encouraged willfulness. The little local chiefs, each subject to his own community who scrutinized and debated his every act, were much more easily controlled and usually behaved with discretion. Not having the lure of higher place they did their best for their own restricted domains. As common interest or necessity required the chiefs in any region met and decided on common policies, and several times each year all the chiefs came together in one of the larger towns at festivals where there were games and feasting and much informal intercourse. . . .

“Yours is not very different from our African way,” Felix remarked to his Indian informant. “You have just enough government to make things go and the control of government is kept always at home under the eyes of those who must endure its activities. But you don’t have the complicated questions of different racial masses, of transport and intercourse, of scientific research and so on, that we in Africa and Asia must meet.”

The young chief looked puzzled at these terms.

“You don’t understand what I mean? Just as well, perhaps. We have the machine heritage that you in this old New World luckily have escaped. Your chief problems are to keep enough cassava and corn and other simple food supplies on hand, to

clear the forest for new lands and occasionally irrigate them, maintain some donkey trails, and to see that your people do not spend too much time in dancing and merrymaking. Lucky folk! They have on the average three days of play for every work day, you say? What would the ancient Americans have thought of that ratio! They begrudged one rest day in seven with an occasional extra holiday to their workers. It took so much valuable time from 'business' and lessened 'profits,' they said, with the result that their machines turned out far more than all of them could buy and enjoy. And they never realized what was the matter until it was too late."

"I want to see your country," the Indian remarked suddenly. "I want to see how the big birdships such as you came here in are made and bring some back with me."

Felix laughed at his naïve desire.

"You might be doing your people a great wrong," he said more gravely, "introducing once more a foreign culture into America!" As if he had at last discovered the key to a perplexing problem he lapsed into silent thought.

One of the greater festivals was celebrated during the visit of the African strangers much to their satisfaction. The mountain trails for a circuit of a hundred miles were alive with the moving population and their animals. For days before people from remote villages began arriving in the city with their laden burros, bringing stuff to barter in the great market then held, as well as their household gear. They set up their straw huts in the many squares of the pleasant city, even under the arcades of the ancient temples, spreading before them straw mats on which were placed the wares they had brought with them, as their ancestors had done for untold centuries. Here were displayed delicate articles of silver and gold (which like their ancestors they valued primarily as ornaments), of wood

and clay and fabric,—all the best work of each family and each community. It was an endless delight to Felix and Veronica to wander among the booths of this immense market, to see thus gathered together the material objects of this Indian civilization. Better workmanship, especially in textiles and metal work, could not be found in Khartoum. The Indian's feeling for form and color was superior to the African's, and the feather-work robes were entirely novel and strangely beautiful.

What interested Felix even more than the beauty and the richness of wares displayed was the marvelous order and system of the entire gathering. Everything seemed to have been arranged for and yet there were few evidences of any preparation for this huge gathering, which had suddenly introduced thousands of people into the city. There was food in abundance for all, there were amusements for all, shelter for all, no noisy or turbulent striving for favored places or drunken brawls and disputes, no thieving or cheating.

"We have been doing this for many years," the young chief replied to the amazed ejaculations of the Africans. "Why should we not do it well? It is the habit of my people to meet often thus in these great festivals and to exchange their wares and their experiences, while enjoying themselves. What people have always done they do well."

"So much order in disorder," Felix observed, as he watched the casual way in which a group of young Indians were preparing the stage for a pantomime of masked dancers to be held that evening. "In Africa we should have thought it all out and taken our precautions—but here these things are done as if they sprang from the ground like the shooting banana sprouts, without forethought."

"They have always done it so," the young man replied simply as if that were all there was to it. . . .

The performance that night of masked dancers under the canopy of the star-pointed heavens intensely interested Veronica and her companions more than it did Felix, who seemed lost in a remote contemplation of all he had seen and felt here in the rediscovered western world. As in a trance he listened to the soft birdlike voices of the native women squatted all around him, to the cries and songs of the prancing actors, to the strange music which seemed to unite all the vocal expression of the New World, the bird voices, the rushing of torrential streams, the waving of immense trees, the whispering of insect life at night. The musicians playing on many unfamiliar instruments—none of metal, many of tubular wood—had an absorption in their performance quite different from anything in the old world. They played entirely by ear, for music was such a common diversion among the Indians that they quickly mastered any piece set for them. It was a strangely soft and gentle music like the bird voices of their women, never harshly or artificially accentuated, continuing as it were the simple sounds of nature, the gentler rhythms of personal life. Unlike African music it was never plaintive, unlike Chinese music never acidulous, unlike the later music of the Christian era never filled with gross dissonances.

“One could listen to this music always without a sense of being cloyed or rasped,” Felix commented with a sigh. “It is soothing like the music of a flowing brook, and somehow continues the consciousness of the hearer. I never heard music that more belonged to its environment, to this still soft night, this peaceful gentle people, to this fertile land breathing all around us! . . . No, we have nothing to teach the Indian in music, nor much in life either. Left to themselves they have made a harmony and discovered happiness. What more can humanity ask for? Our sole effort must be not to mar what,

once mercifully relieved of European culture, they have achieved with their own resources, out of their own natures. Had I another life to live, my dear, I think I should elect to live it among these Indians, for they have by nature many of the qualities I have striven all my life to acquire and to teach to others."

The perfumed night air—here perfumed by flowers, not by art—lulled the senses as did the birdlike music coming from the dark depths of palms behind the great plaza where the evening's entertainment had taken place.

"These Indians," the old man continued musingly, "have always loved flowers, children, and music even in the days of their utmost degradation. A people who have the love of those three things rooted in their natures need no help from us or any strange God! A truth that the old Spaniards could not perceive, nor the miserable American go-getters either, for that matter, for all their achievements in plumbing and skyscraping. . . . No, the best we can do for the old New World is to let it alone! If Columbus and his followers had never invaded its shores, who knows what miracles its Indian peoples might not have accomplished. They might have discovered Europe before it was too late and saved it from its wretched fate. No, no, I am against Expansion into the western continent!"

Veronica smiled wisely and said softly,—

"That, my dear, is on the lap of the gods, as they used to say."

"Pish," the old man retorted, "we don't use such silly expressions these days. It is in our own laps!"

Chapter Eleven

THE GREAT DECISION

WHAT shall we do with this rediscovered old New World, now fast emerging from its glacial sleep? Shall we colonize it as did the Europeans fifteen hundred years ago? Exploit its riches for our own enjoyment as they did? Send thither our restless spirits, our greedy and dispossessed, and permit them to work their wills upon it, even to the extermination of its scattered natives, as they once did? There are those among us, I fear, whose farthest hope is to reenact on the modern scale that ancient drama of cruelty and greed, who dream of rioting across the vast forests and plains of this almost empty continent and with our greater technical efficiency converting its virgin land to something very like what it became under the domination of the ancient Americans, whose mechanical remains we are now uncovering in old New York and elsewhere. They would relax our wise control of population and with the specious excuse of supplying the new lands with humanity propagate at will. . . . Is that *all* our modern world with its inheritance of the cultures of the past, with its evolved civilization, has to offer America? Another freebooting expedition conducted on somewhat improved lines to loot a new continent?"

The old man paused as he wrote these last words in the fine Greek script which he used for intimate personal notes and rising from his writing table paced to and fro on his loggia above the old Blue Nile, letting his eyes rove contemplatively

over the lovely irregularity of park and grassed street and garden and forest so familiar to him. Since his return from America he had been immersed in the ideas which he should present to the great congregation of leaders already assembling from all quarters of the civilized world to consider his report of the Expedition and debate what concerted action, if any, should be taken about the future use of the New World.

Even before the airship had turned homewards Felix had summoned the ablest leaders throughout the Old World to meet with him in Khartoum as soon after his return as was practicable in order to discuss the problem of America in relation with the Old World. And now once more back in the beloved surroundings of his African home he had shut himself off from all interruptions so that he might tranquilly compose his mind and jot down the clear conclusions at which he had arrived. When he had set out from old New York on his long survey of the wilderness that America had become he was troubled in spirit, even depressed, with no clue to a satisfactory solution of the problem, which he felt was peculiarly his own to solve. For he had been the most ardent and active proponent of the great Expedition of Rediscovery and Exploration. It had been the chief interest of the last forty years of his active life and his whole soul was involved in its triumphant solution. . . .

When he had set out from old New York his mind had been dark with doubt and foreboding. If after all the long efforts made under his leadership the result should be merely to repeat the disastrous epic of riotous human individualism and personal greed that had composed the previous story of America? The elements for such a colossal débâcle were all present as his sensitive spirit realized soon after treading the soil of the New World. It was as if an exhalation from the past rose out of the buried wreck of ancient America, as if the

fine youth who had gathered there to uncover the bones of its old civilization imbibed something of the evil spirit that had finally brought this energetic people to their doom. As if the very air, that sparkling and tonic atmosphere of the western world, stimulated those who breathed it to a reckless individualism, a sensual relapse into atavistic habits of thought and feeling. At the moment if it had been within his power the old Greek would have packed off every member of the large Expeditionary Force to his old home, shut up shop and left the steel and concrete bones of the huge mastodon being uncovered to molder under the forest leaves of countless ages!

But once removed from the miasmatic influence of old New York, sailing over the lovely carpet of green forest on the untouched earth beneath the airship, hope revived and when his party discovered the first evidences of survival by the native inhabitants of North America something quickened within him, an eagerness that rose to fever height as they journeyed southwards to the pueblos and on to the more populous regions of Central America.

The native owner of America, the Indian, had survived and miraculously, left to his own devices, had sloughed off the evil consequences of European domination,—had come back to himself, to a larger, happier self than his race had ever known. Instead of spending his strength in futile strifes, his continent being vast enough to support far more inhabitants than it yet had or was likely to have for many years to come (unless invaded) the Indian had evolved according to the lines of his own nature, which in significant ways were quite different from those of any civilization known to Felix on the older continents. The Indian had rejected the machine, permitting those contrivances once forced upon him to decay and never apparently attempting to replace them with others or to improve upon them. For his essentially gentle and simple nature

a machineless world where one neither moved at unnatural speed nor made huge masses of useless things, was sufficient, satisfactory. His wants were few and easily satisfied. He had long since forgotten—if he had ever acquired—the white man's creed of Holy Desire! He loved children, flowers, birds. He wished to dance and make music like the birds and be gay. He wanted food, not much, a simple shelter against wind and rain, the love of his woman and her children around him, the gossip of the market and the festival. A little work, a little play; sunlight, trees, flowers, birds; thus growing from day to day in the encompassing womb of Nature to lapse into dust and become again part of the inanimate whole! . . .

Thinking these thoughts Felix sat down once more at his writing table, a grave smile illuminating the sensitive lines of his old face. What more, he thought, might one safely add to such an existence? Knowledge? A dubious acquisition as the human record amply proved exceedingly difficult to ascertain, with the best of intentions, and usually debased to selfish ends. Riches and technical efficiency? Going hand in hand, they had been used for the most part by the strong to enslave the weak, and not to create human happiness. Wisdom? Ah, yes, a precious and indestructible element, but the simple Indian might have discovered his share of that,—of human wisdom. . . . Slowly the old man formed the exquisite characters of his script.

“What then have we moderns to offer the people of this New World, now rediscovered? One great and deserved boon,—to be let alone, freedom to work out their own dream of life, which so far as I can see is a lovely and a happy one, as serviceable as any we with all our technical efficiency and mastery of nature have been able to create. . . . However debatable that statement may be, at least it is *their* dream; they have

a supreme right to it, untouched, uncontaminated by others until they themselves desire to change it. . . .

“So in conclusion,”—the old man’s delicate script wavered and he paused frequently in forming the words as from extreme fatigue,—“so in conclusion,” he repeated, “I advise that for the present we moderns abstain from all intervention in the New World! that we send them from time to time embassies of our best and wisest youths to study their society for their own gain and where possible to give them what they may need of our stores of scientific knowledge, never forcing such gifts upon them, however! Conscious always that they go to the New World as learners and guests, not as masters or superiors, which they are not. Thus we shall provide for our bolder and more restless spirits an outlet for their roving dispositions and access to another and possibly happier existence than any we have been able to create . . . and here the dream ends.”

As he traced waveringly these last words (which had no apparent relevance) the pen fell from the old man’s thin fingers and his head dropped forward onto his folded arms.

There some hours later Veronica rushing in from her mountain home discovered him, his old dog with head between his paws watching his master. At first she thought Felix had fallen into an old age nap, a habit which since his return from his American journey had grown on him. But when the familiar touch of her hand upon his shoulder did not arouse him she knew that he was dead. She stroked the averted face gently with the ends of her fingers while she read the sheet of fine Greek script on the table at his side, as her old friend’s farewell words to her and to the world.

. . . “And here ends the dream,” she read aloud, “for him and for me—but not for others.”

Swiftly bending over she kissed his head.

